TRAIL OF THE GRAND SEIGNEUR

OLIN L. LYMAN

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010

http://www.archive.org/details/trailofgrandseig00lyma

TRAIL OF THE GRAND SEIGNEUR

RENEE DE MONTEFORT

The Trail of the Grand Seigneur

BY

OLIN L. LYMAN

With Frontispiece from Painting by Clare Angell

THE CORSE PRESS, *Publisher*
SANDY CREEK, NEW YORK

Copyright 1926
by
THE CORSE PRESS
Sandy Creek, N. Y.

Fifty-first Thousand

TO
THE MEMORY OF
R. A. OAKES

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
Foreword	. . . . .	
I.	An Opportune Dian . . .	1
II.	The Samaritans	8
III.	Renee	16
IV.	John Godfrey	26
V.	A Bravo and a Bond . . .	34
VI.	My Dream Lady	46
VII.	The Cast of the Die	58
VIII.	The Recruits	73
IX.	The Spy	83
X.	The Chase	91
XI.	Lieutenant Stranahan . . .	97
XII.	The Alarm	107
XIII.	A Broken Sabbath	113
XIV.	Two Graves	125
XV.	In the Lion's Jaws	132
XVI.	Red Rolfe	142
XVII.	At the King's Inn	154
XVIII.	A Duel and a Revelation . .	164
XIX.	A Friend in Philistia . . .	175
XX.	Gray Wreathing Mists . . .	188
XXI.	In Frontenac	199
XXII.	A Wintry Interlude	214

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
XXIII.	The Brand of the Bravo	225
XXIV.	A Leaf from the Past	237
XXV.	The Woe from Frontenac	250
XXVI.	The Strength of Ten	265
XXVII.	Futility	278
XXVIII.	The Three Musketeers	284
XXIX.	The Rope Job	296
XXX.	A Wanderer's Return	301
XXXI.	When Women Dare	309
XXXII.	The Narrows	317
XXXIII.	A Broken Dream	326
XXXIV.	Out Into the Night	334
XXXV.	The Lion Caged	346
XXXVI.	The Proving of Cyrenus	355
XXXVII.	The Enemy Paves the Way	368
XXXVIII.	Unmasked	375
XXXIX.	Cyrenus Smites the Rock	385
XL.	The Trail of the Grand Seigneur	396
XLI.	A Cry in the Night	404
XLII.	Into the Shadow and Beyond	409
XLIII.	Till the Book Unfolds	421
XLIV.	The Paths of Peace	430

FOREWORD

At the foot of Ontario the old hamlet drowses in its simple peace, the peace of an old military post which fronts the waters where once two warring nations, now at amity, maintained embattled fleets whose pseudo-wrestlings, after all, were productive of but little more mortality than wind and wave now entail to the following of the peaceful pursuits of commerce. There is but little at the old post to perpetuate its memories of former glories. Only the barracks, where, from time to time, some regiment of U. S. regulars rests from the labors of campaigning; the old graveyard where lie the bones of Pike and other patriots of the struggle of 1812; the battleground where the batteries once frowned, manned by simple sons of the soil, who, withal, were Americans, and therefore marksmen for the world to marvel at. Only these, and some odd scraps of history, some hoary traditions, and the intangible something of the thrilling past that hovers in the atmosphere of the old town. These are all, but they make of it a thing alive; they resurrect the past.

O. L. L.

Sackets Harbor, N. Y., November, 1902.

CHAPTER I

AN OPPORTUNE DIAN

I swung on through the woods, my rifle shouldered, my hound heeling. The air, pungent with pine and redolent wtih cool autumnal fragrance, was a resinous Madeira. I quaffed it in great draughts, whereat it went to my head and I whistled in bibulous enjoyment. A nearby bird, moved to rivalry, bubbled mockingly. I looked up and beheld him on a branch, watching me with bright, scornful gaze. I desisted in my lesser effort and passed on, while he trilled triumph. The hound turned, regarding the songster with malignant eyes and whining me sympathy. We pushed on toward the falls, now close at hand.

The hound barked with canine enjoyment as I strode on down the wooded bank. The subtle perfume of sweet fern mingled with the virile odor of the forest mold; my feet crunched deep in a royal carpet of orange and crimson, spurned by the branches that swayed above me. The afternoon sun, low in the west, shredded narrow yellow lanes of light through the leafy canopy overhead, piercing the shadow-murk that trailed where the dead leaves drifted, and glinting the brilliant glories of their shrouds. The breeze crooned in the pines; to my right the river rippled, murmuring. A twig snapped beneath my foot and a red squirrel left a pile of leaves where he had been burrowing and scampered

up the trunk of a balsam, chattering angrily at me Rip, being young, paused to nose about a porcupine which had suddenly become balled at our approach. In his own interest I was obliged to mildly kick the hound from temptation.

"Rip," I observed, dragging him by his unwilling neck away from the fretful dilemma on which he would have unwittingly impaled himself, "there are things undreamed of in your fool philosophy."

Turning sharply from the obscure trail, I passed to the right through a dense thicket, the roar of falling water deepening as I approached. A moment and I emerged into a spot covered with sprawling blackberry briars, a few stunted pines bearing them company. A few paces brought me to the river's brink, where I cast myself down with a sigh of appreciation. The dog rolled on his back beside me, his paws flung skyward, yawning with lazy satisfaction.

Deer River, gorged with fuss and foam, swirled and eddied before me. Hemmed within crowding banks, which narrowed as the dizzy brink grew nearer, the brawling waters rushed on to their tremendous leap to liberty. Over the edge of a sheer wall of limestone, nigh two hundred feet in height, they tumbled with a wild roar of exultation into a yawning chasm that was fringed on either side by giddy walls of rock. From the boiling caldron below me the mists wreathed, floating up toward the greenery above, incense to the dryads. Bits of forest debris spun down the river, searching futilely for something to lay hold on, only to be grasped the tighter and hurled onward to the dizzy plunge.

Whimsically I reached out a hand and the next instant the hound, grasped by the scruff of his neck,

swung. whimpering over the abyss. Shivering and whining, he clawed the air and my hand impartially, while I laughed. In a moment, touched by the poor creature's terror, I hauled him back and ruefully regarded my badly scratched hand. The brute crawled to me and licked it, fawning.

"Poor devil!" said I, rubbing his head with a certain sneaking sense of inferiority, "let us go." So, regaining my rifle, I turned back, the dog following, sniffing critically here and there as we proceeded. Regaining the trail, I set off down the river, the thunder of the cataract lessening in volume as I strode. The shadows trembled and lengthened, the murk deepening, for the afternoon was waning.

But I made no haste, for I cared not where nightfall found me. It was my custom to leave home when the mood seized me, to range the forest where I would. For weeks, even months, during the summers I roamed as fancy willed, heart to heart with what is nature's own. I had my hound for company, esteeming it far better than that of many men. My hook and rifle provided my larder; a fire and my blanket, with the dog snoring beside me, were the only nocturnal essentials. Occasionally I fell in with a hunter or trapper with whom I held brief parley before we resumed our respective wanderings. But mostly I was alone, though after all not alone.

For it is only in the town that man may dwell alone, an unheeded mite among the many, a struggling atom adrift in a swelling sea of selfishness. Let him take his seared soul and sick heart into the balm that heals, the benison of God's garden. The zephyrs that rustle its foliage will fan his throbbing temples, its cool shadows and mellowed sunlight

will ease his burning eyes. A hundred other eyes in which lurks nothing of human selfishness, will shyly peer at him; from every branch a burst of liquid melody will peal for him. Sweet springs, cold as the snows of winter, will gush for his good out of the brown earth; the flesh of the forest awaits to furnish him sustenance. In the grand, illimitable majesty of his environment the petty slings and arrows will be robbed of their poison tips. The forest's peace enters into him and a greater boon than this there cannot be.

Ah, early days! in this the winter of my span, I gaze through a blinding film out over the bared waste where once the forest found its way unchecked to my very door. I move sadly along the dried beds of water courses that in the old days I was hard put to it to ford. It is very dismal to me. Desolate stretches of stumpy pasture land and struggling grain fields have succeeded the virgin splendor of old; the stones wither in the water courses, the sun glaring pitilessly down into their dried beds, where once the dream shadows wavered over the black pools that lay deep and still outside the shadows. It is the doom sounded by the woodman's axe, a knell that had stark death in it. It was inevitable, but also pitiful. My eyes smart as I write and I am not ashamed.

But on this day no dirge dinned doom, no sinister chord clashed to drown a harmony that was divine. Ah me! youth will not be denied. The past a wistful memory untouched by gall, the pulsing present, the future a brave dream of snapping sails in the fair winds that feather with spray drift the green of a boundless sea! The tempests quiescent in the womb of the Disillusionment, the gray of the Awak-

ening yet far beyond the blue. Verily God is good Who gives us the springtime of our years!

So I pushed on, the red in my cheek and the light in my eyes, on where the hand of my fate beckoned me and I did not know.

As I proceeded I cast about for a suitable spot in which to pass the night. I determined to stop some time before dusk, for I had tramped far and was somewhat wearied.

At length, some distance below the falls, I came upon the spot I sought. It was in a little clearing hedged by tall spruce and poplars. A giant pine rose sombrely among them. The dead ashes of a fire met my eyes. A rude lean-to of logs and lopped branches stood there, beneath which one might crawl with his blanket and be at rest. The place was clearly a primitive rendezvous for roving woodsmen.

Well content, I leaned my rifle against a convenient cedar, unslung my slender pack and leisurely set about gathering brushwood, which I heaped together, ready to light. Whistling to the dog, I then started toward the river, which was not far distant. Arrived there, I rigged my tackle and fell to angling. The stream ran strongly to trout at this point and I soon had several fine fellows. I returned to camp with them. The red lances of sunlight, which quivered through the embowering leaves paled and dimmed. Twilight, a soft benison, was approaching.

In pleasant mood I began preparations for supper, trolling a rollicking drinking song the while in my dubious basso. Some moments passed, when I was attracted by a low growl from the hound.

I turned. His teeth were bared and his short

hair bristled, while he trembled with snarling eagerness. The next instant, while I was staring vainly in quest of the disturber, he sprang forward, jaws gaping. They closed upon something which he shook like a gust-blown leaf, a tiny, spitting panther cub. The little beast, a baby in bulk but passionately courageous, struggled, clawed and spat. The blood rimmed a vicious scratch in the hound's jowl. With a growl of rage he dashed the body of the malignant infant to the ground, throttling it.

Seizing a heavy fagot from my pile of firewood, I rushed toward the hound to persuade him to let go, for I feared the mother was not far away. Nor was she, for in that instant a horrible scream over my head froze my creeping spine. I halted, searching for her.

Suddenly the bent branch of a tree fully twenty feet away sprang upward like a released spring. A lithe shape launched out from it, swift and true as a dart, upon the back of my hound. A furious melee ensued; a hideous din of agonized yelps, mad screams and hoarse growls; the sight of torn flesh and the swift, sickening smell of spurting blood.

It was over almost instantly, while I stood stupefied with the suddenness of it. The hound was no coward, but he was only a pup after all, a youngster of pitiful inexperience, whose rashness had wrung from him the supreme penalty, his humble life. And before me, sniffing at the body of the dead cub, was its furious mother.

My rifle! Ah, fool that I had been, it lay far from my hand, near my pile of firewood. I turned stealthily toward it. The creature raised her head, snarling, and crouched, eyeing me with a glance of flame, tail thudding the dead leaves.

There was no time for the gun. I reached mechanically for my knife. My eyes fell upon the mangled body of the dog and a murderous rage possessed me as my fingers grasped the buckhorn handle. I jerked the weapon from my belt as the cat sprang.

She pounced full upon me, bearing me backward. One hand sought her throat, with the other I drove the knife again and again into her body. She had thrice nine lives. A red hot flash seemed to sear my breast and shoulder, my limbs burned and I knew she was tearing me. An awful pain traversed my forehead; my sight was blotted out in a red sea of blood. My grip upon the knife handle relaxed, my arm falling to my side.

Then from afar, stealing through the crimson waves that beat upon and were overwhelming me, there came faintly to my dulled ears a woman's voice.

"Prenez garde!" it cried. "Your eyes! Protect your eyes, monsieur!"

With a last despairing effort I flung both arms over my face. As I did so I felt the flesh torn from my right forearm. In that instant a sudden roar rang in my ears. I felt the fiend which had harassed me roll from me, sreaming and thrashing in agony, and with my body bathed in a swift flame of pain, my senses left me.

CHAPTER II

WITH SAMARITANS

I stirred uneasily, midway between sleep and waking. I stretched forth an arm, yawning. A swift pang seized it and my yawn faded in a groaning "Damn!" With a distinct sense of ill-usage I opened my eyes.

My face flamed. "I—I beg your pardon, miss," I mumbled humbly, "but did I swear just now?"

Sweet eyes danced with ready absolution. "Ma foi! you did, m'sieur," she replied, deliciously demure, "but you are shrived. It is likely you will desire to do so many times again, but you must not."

"It is written," I assured her, and ground my teeth as a stinging pain quivered through my shoulder. I suddenly became conscious of bonds and awoke to the fact that I was bandaged liberally. Lifting my uninjured hand I felt my forehead, which was throbbing maddeningly. It was swathed, as was my arm and the upper part of my body. I sighed resignedly.

"These were absolutely necessary then?" I asked, sadly indicating the swaddlings.

"Oui, monsieur, and will be for some days," responded the girl with decision. "I arrived just in time," she continued, grown suddenly grave. "You are much torn."

"Faith, mademoiselle, I believe you!" I groaned,

as by an untoward movement the truth of her words was borne in upon me. "Meanwhile," I added, as I had recourse to sphinx-like immobility, "I beg to humbly thank you for your succor of an idiot stranger who leaves his gun pine-propping rather than for panther fighting. Also, I marvel, mam'selle, at your skill and courage."

"M'sieur," she replied, ignoring my tribute to her powers, "you are to be patient while I prepare you dejeuner." She rose and departed, a lovely vision, kitchenward.

"I wonder where I am?" mused I, and turned my head. My eyes met the rough log walls of a primitive sleeping room. The furnishings were scant but possessed of a pleasing neatness. Everywhere, despite the inevitable severity of the surroundings, a woman's dainty touches had wrought a transformation. The fragrance of a great bunch of fresh wildflowers in a vase nearby refreshed me. The walls were hung with pretty decorations that showed a rare taste. Here and there hung a painting, striking in execution and plainly of value, while odd trifles, unquestionably from foreign parts, lent a certain picturesqueness of contrast to the rough log walls and the simpler furnishings of the room.

The trilling of birds outside mingled with a pleasant tinkle of crockery from the kitchen. A flood of sunshine poured through the tiny window, the yellow bar wavering elusively just alongside my bed. I thrust out my well hand and let it bask in the glorious radiance.

Mademoiselle's skirts heralded her coming. With their approaching swish I lay expectant, for I was hungry. She entered, setting a tempting tray upon the tiny table. A whiff of steaming coffee and the

crisp aroma of buttered toast merged into a happy union.

She regarded me thoughtfully. "You would fare better if you sat up, I suppose," she ruminated, "but it will hurt you, m'sieur."

"Death hath been dared for the stomach's sake," I answered. "Witness your mouse traps." And then with much wriggling and wincing, assisted sympathetically by my gracious lady, who entrenched the pillows behind my aching back, I prepared for the onslaught upon my breakfast. She set the tray before me on the coverlet.

I began while she removed from me, gazing out of the tiny window full in the sunlight, which glorified the gold-brown radiance of her hair, deepened the pink flush in the fragrant cheek. I marked her profile, pure as snow, from forehead to rounded chin, from the tip of which a living line of beauty curved to her snowy throat. A straight silken eyebrow was visible, while the lashes, I could see, were long and curling. Her pretty print gown, with a tiny white apron about her round waist, lent an alluring touch of domesticity to her beautiful, slim figure. Withal, she was palpably French; divinely French, I mused, and most divinely fair. I fell a-dreaming, speculating upon the color of her eyes.

Suddenly she turned, flashing them full upon me. The sheen of a sleeping sea was in them, the vague greenish shade that rests when winds are sleeping and a blue sky stretches overhead, across which the white dream-clouds drift like windblown sails. Out of the open portals of her eyes a white soul gazed fearlessly, a sweet soul that could not sin.

"Monsieur!" she cried with mock severity, "pardonnez moi, but why are you not eating?"

"Mine eyes are unruly, mademoiselle," I answered, with due humility. "They have been devouring you."

"Ciel! but they are cannibals," she answered. "Rest them, s'il vous plait, and devour your toast, else it will be dry and your coffee quite cold. In the absence of better, I may then serve your unruly eyes, monsieur, as dessert."

"They could ask no better," I responded, and again attacked my breakfast. Her mirthlit eyes made soft denial as she shook her head. She drew a chair near me and sat down.

I finished hastily. "Where am I, mam'selle?" I inquired. "How long have I been here and to whom am I indebted for this almost maternal solicitude, which I assure you is appreciated?"

"You are in the cabin of Vincent De Montefort," she answered, "a few miles from the scene of your misadventure of yesterday. I am his daughter, Renee. It is now nine of the morning after, m'sieur. When I had finished that horrible beast I started back for my father. I met him coming up the river bank in search of me, as it was late and he was worried. Together we managed to get you here, though you are no feather, m'sieur. My father brought you on his back a good part of the way and he rubs it today in consequence. He dressed your wounds. You were unconscious and we hardly expected you to revive so soon. You have an excellent constitution. You are blest, m'sieur."

"It has always stood me in good stead," I answered. "But mam'selle, why has it been decreed that this incubus should be thrust upon you? It will be some weeks, I fear, ere I can make my adieux."

"I beg you will not speak so," she replied, a note of vexation in her vibrant voice with its fascinating accent. "A hand to help, I hope, would not be withheld from my father or myself, in like stress. The world has much of helplessness, m'sieur. Its creatures should help each other."

A firm step sounded in the kitchen. "It is mon pere," she said, and rose.

A pair of keen black eyes peered at me from under white bushy brows. Luxuriant hair and a beard like snow, with handsome features, of a patrician type. M. De Montefort looked superior to his present primitive surroundings. His fine forehead and finely moulded head told of an intellect of rare power. He was tall and finely made and the gentleman was the more evident for the rough garb he wore.

He greeted me with true Gallic courtesy. "Bien! you once more realize then," he said affably, taking my well hand in his own. "Though I doubt if the awakening is wholly pleasing to you, Monsieur——"

"Warburton," I supplied, "Gilbert Warburton, of Sackets Harbor. You have doubtless heard of the hamlet, whose fame is spreading just now, the times being troublous. As for my waking, I can assure you that it was wholly pleasant, as my eyes first fell upon your daughter, who has ministered unto me and does yet minister. So completely has she taken my thoughts from my somewhat disheveled self, that although she has just favored me with the names of those to whom I am so deeply indebted, I own I quite forgot to mention my own. If, under such incomparable nursing, I do not advance, I shall indeed be ungrateful."

"It is my wish," he returned courteously, "that

you may speedily recover your health and strength. That my daughter will assist you in the process," with an affectionate glance at the girl, "I am as confident as yourself. I, too, have suffered, and she has brought me back to modest usefulness and a ravenous appetite."

We talked a while on various matters, chiefly of the imminence of trouble between the struggling young nation and its powerful parent. I soon perceived that, like so many of his countrymen at the time, his sympathies were all with the infant.

"She is no doting mother, this England," he said with an eloquent French shrug. "She does not coddle, ah, jamais! Her babes and sucklings must needs toddle forth into the market place, when hardly from the breast, for pennies for her palm, and when the gleanings are small castigation is severe. We of France know her, yes, but not to love her. I do not doubt, m'sieur, that if the pinch comes you may command the swords of other Lafayettes."

"This infant has ceased to mewl, m'sieur," I rejoined. "He has become a sturdy stripling, somewhat lacking in filial feeling perhaps, but then, tenderness may be throttled by tyranny. If it comes to it, I fear me that matricide may be attempted by us with ghastly cheerfulness. But there will be need of many swords."

The girl listened with attention, her eyes sparkling with sympathy. It was natural, I thought, that she should favor us. The divine heart of woman goes ever out to the weak and struggling. Also, was she not her father's daughter?

After a little he left us with a polite apology, to look at some traps he had set in the forest. "It

is small game I am after," he said smiling, "for their skins, which I dispose of at Albany. It is one of a multitude of pursuits which serve to pass the time here," he added, with somewhat bitter sarcasm. "At all events, they keep one from too much thinking."

With an affectionate glance at his daughter he left the house. She stood by the window when he had gone, gazing out into the sunshine with far-away eyes. By and by a tremulous sigh escaped her, and I saw the sweet eyes dim with tears. My own stung at the sight, for they were ever unruly when the brine welled into those of others. I scorned it as a weakness then, but the years have taught me better. God has set ideals for men, and if a man would approach as close to them as infinite effort lies, there must beat in his breast something of the heart of a woman. Without it, mere mentality, scourged by unrecking ambition, may become monstrous. Christ wept over that Jerusalem whose pharisaical priests, fearful for their crumbling sovereignty, a little later destroyed him.

She turned presently, with a brave throwing off of the cloud which had oppressed her. "Monsieur, I will read to you," she said, smiling brightly. "We brought some books from France. Though," she added, flushing slightly with the afterthought, "we have but little in English."

"Que fait il?" asked I, and laughed at her little start of astonishment. "I had the advantage of a tutor, mam'selle," I explained, "who had explored the nooks and crannies of your fascinating tongue. I learned it better than any other portion of the erudition with which he sought, though with head shakings, to cram me."

She made selection of a volume; what, I scarcely

heeded. I but realized with indolent appreciation that it was a dreamy old work, of exquisite romance, a poetic tale that fell in music from a pair of equally exquisite lips. I turned my head toward the low rocker in which she was sitting, gazing into her lovely face. Of this she was unconscious, being engrossed in the story. Content to watch her, the import of the tale was but of secondary importance, and my mind, busying itself with the lady, did but indifferently make note of the lyric.

Long I gazed, till my eyelids in sheer weariness closed. I struggled lazily for a moment to raise them, but they remained veiled, while a pleasant feeling of lassitude stole over me. It being impolite, I fought feebly with the feeling, but finally relaxed, giving myself up to the benign influence. The clear tones of the girl's voice tinkled far away, like sweet bells. The veil of the dusk settled down, the stars studded the black night sky, and under a giant tree, with a smouldering fire near me, I lay, the soft wind whirring the leaves over my outstretched body, my dog dozing beside me, while I drifted to sleep and dreams.

CHAPTER III

RENEE

The days sped and gradually brought back to me my impaired strength. The monotony was rendered pleasant by the constant attendance of my charming nurse, who gave me what time she could spare. Meanwhile the breeze that blew in at the little window grew cooler, bearing the autumnal benison of the passing year. I chafed for I was anxious to again look upon the forest.

M. De Montefort was no mean physician and my wounds healed rapidly. That I would be scarred for life, however, was already certain. The wound in my forehead was not deep and would not show prominently, but my body had borne the brunt and would bear witness to it.

It came that in a few more days, albeit with some groans I was able to hobble one morning to the little doorway of the cabin to gaze again upon the majestic sweep and beauty of the forest which enclosed on all sides the small clearing in which the house was built. From the right there came to me the distant music of the river. A light breeze whispered in the pines. Everywhere was a regal carpet of multi-hued leaves, constantly drifting down from the limbs that were still ablaze with color. I gazed up at the branches, my throat contracting and with wet eyes. A fierce feeling of thankfulness filled me,

of gratitude that I once more gazed upon this beauty and heard the soft murmurings of Nature, God's handmaiden, instead of lying under one of those very branches, gazing up blankly with dead unseeing eyes, the melodies of birds and the wistful sighing of the breeze sounding in vain for my deaf, unheeding ears.

A light step and she stood beside me, looking out with me at the glory of the dying year. An impudent sunbeam darted swiftly into her sweet eyes, dazzling them and shifting to her hair, where it rioted with fiery zeal. A vagrant whiff of the soft wind whisked by us, laden with woodsy smells and with its necromancy stirring that indefinable penned something that beats and throbs, uplifting where Nature is, but lies dormant within the city's walls. Overhead a few white clouds drifted. Near us a solitary robin twittered, the summer still bubbling in his foolish throat. As if in mockery there came at the moment the harsh answering clamor of a flock of geese, high up, winging their way to the southward.

I surveyed the robin with concern. "Go and do thou likewise," I advised him gravely. He shot a wicked glance at me, and, leaving his limb, fluttered to the ground and went to grubbing.

The girl had been watching the squawking flock disappear over the trees. She shivered a little.

"It is pitiful," she said, a little break in her voice, "this dying each year of the summer, m'sieur. The leaves fall and the trees are bare and the snow is deep and cold. And when the wind is always wailing, ciel! it is like a requiem for the dead. And the silence so tomb-like, in the long nights, with only the howls of the wild beasts to break it! No one comes; we have not even the birds; only my father and I,

alone! Oh, it is so horribly lonely in the winter, m'sieur!"

Her eyes were wet, there was a note of rebellion in her voice. A great wave of pity rose within me. In a flash I comprehended what the dreary monotone of her life must be with her ardent spirit and fresh youth.

"Yes, Mademoiselle," I answered her gently, "but after all, the summer comes again and brings the birds with it. See, even the one just gone has left one fool behind," and I indicated the solitary robin, who, gorged with grubs, was ruffling his feathers and watching me from his limb with malice in his beady eyes.

"Who, Toti?" she rejoined with surprise, "Why, m'sieur, Toti is no fool. Come here, Toti!" she demanded, and the bird fluttered to her shoulder.

"Toti," she assured me with severity, "is far from a fool. Au contraire, he knows more than many men."

"Sans doute," I murmured, and bowed with due humility. The wretched bird scolded at me, his head held impertinently to one side.

"I picked Toti from the ground one day when he was only a baby," she explained, taking the complacent bird in her hand and stroking him. "His wing was broken. I mended him, m'sieur, though he will never fly very much. Poor baby, he couldn't go south if he wanted to, along with those crazy geese, though he'd not leave his mamma if he could; would he, Toti?" and she fell to lavishing caresses upon the miserable bird. I glowered at him, envying him his feathers.

"Mademoiselle," I suggested, with a last glance of contempt at the lucky Toti, who returned the look

with one which I could have sworn evidenced a leering triumph, "if you have the time let us stroll through the forest a little way. Only a few days remain to us of this delightful weather. Behold, the snows come speedily, mam'selle." The bird, released, fluttered back to his limb.

"Tres bien, I will go, m'sieur," she assented, with a wistful glance toward the gorgeous foliage. "But you, are you strong enough? You are yet quite lame in your legs; is it not so?"

I smothered a smile at the quaintness of her speech, rendered the richer by the most delicious of accents.

"True, they are somewhat stiffened," I assured her soberly. "My joints will doubtless creak unpleasantly, but the oil of a little exercise they must have. With you beside me I shall soon be skipping like the young hills."

"Monsieur, you grow extravagant," she exclaimed, with a little frown that brought to me the wish to offend again. "But wait a moment," and she left me on the threshold, reappearing shortly with a wheaten loaf. "You shall presently see," she promised, reading the question in my eyes. "Sir, attend me, for we now set forth."

We left the cottage, a brave little dot in the wilderness, and in a moment were out of the little clearing and in the depths of the woods. We followed a well defined footpath, evidently used considerably by the Frenchman and his daughter. From the increasing murmur of water I gathered that we were approaching the river. We had our guns, for the northland was young then and one could not tell at what moment a weapon might be needed. The path ran tortuously, avoiding large obstacles. Evi-

dently for his daughter's convenience, M. De Montefort had been at pains to create an easy progress, though she was the last person in the world to be finicky about a few briars or fallen tree trunks.

She preceded me, rather slowly, on account of my injuries, while I hobbled after her, ludicrously enough I have no doubt. She was a rare young Dian, moving before me with grace and a fine free power, her slender body erect as a dart, yet softened with fair contours. Her short trim skirt just cleared an ankle, whose beauty was not obscured by the low, serviceable shoes she wore. Her rifle rested easily and correctly in the hollow of her arm, muzzle downward. As we proceeded she maintained a bantering fire of conversation with me. I had bewildering glimpses of a perfect half profile, the cheek flushed pink with the tang, like champagne, in the air; a clear eye, blue-green like the sea, laughing its challenge; the tinkle of tones like sweet bells. It was Elysium. I was content to hobble.

After a time we reached a point where the path turned sharply. Some distance more and the voice of the water, hitherto pleasantly discursive, had become a truculent roar. Now we emerged into a small clearing, which had been burned over at some previous time, lapping a precipitous bank which sheered abruptly to the river thirty feet below. The brawling little stream here disported itself into a web of miniature cascades, whirling eddies and foaming rapids, the water swirling madly hither and yon in its rock-hewn bed. Yet for all its fertile rush and whirl, there lay along the edges of the stream—hemmed by outer guards of black sullen rocks—great pulseless pools, deep and still, where

the shadows brooded and a strange peace rested, unmindful of the puny clamor of the outer shallows.

The girl and I stood quietly gazing at the little stream with its ridiculous violence. There was something grotesquely impotent about it; one felt a vague pity at its pigmy strivings to burst its narrow bonds. It growled like a puppy, it snapped and snarled, dashing itself vainly against the rocky banks; then foiled but persevering still, rushing on with angry muttering to find another point of assault. And on either side of the narrow gorge, the great grim forest, majestic and illimitable, calmly contemptuous, seemed to press forward the closer, as if to crush and throttle the slender thread of water that so daringly divided it against its mighty self. The fancy was a strange one. I laughed.

The witch beside me had been watching me. She read my thought upon the tablet of my mutilated face.

"Ah, yes, m'sieur, you laugh," she said, with a strange little smile. "Poor little stream amuses you, does it not, with its spittings and snarlings that come to nothing, while the forest laughs? But m'sieur, have you forgotten the spring when the snows melt and the great rains soak and drench? Ah, it is then the turn of the little stream! I have seen," she continued,—her voice grown solemn, her eyes holding my own,—"a great mass of yellow water rolling by the spot on which we stand, nearly reaching the edge of this very bank, which crumbled and fell into it in great clods. It does not then growl and grumble, the little stream. No, it roars and rumbles like the thunder. It is cruel, too, for it remembers how the forest laughed. Ma foi! the

great proud trees I have seen, drowned and dead, dashed to pieces by the little stream. Yes, and the bodies of men, too, beaten and battered; men who would wade it as it is now and laugh at it, as you did just now, m'sieur. For the little stream remembers and does not forget or forgive. No, it is a demon, a great, monstrous demon, tearing at the vitals of the trees that mocked it, sucking the life blood from the crumbling earth. To destroy, only to destroy and to roar as the lion roars with the joy of it. Why should we laugh, monsieur? Have you not also seen?"

I surveyed her with a certain wonder. Her words and the dramatic manner accompanying them had told, and in a flash I had been made to perceive the sinister spirit animating the boisterous waters even as she saw it. The fuss and foam below me was suddenly pregnant with poignant possibilities. I seemed to see in it the horrible, shapeless Thing, the sleeping Terror that her graphic speech had conjured. But as I sobered her sudden laughter saluted my ears. Having spelled me serious, it was her pleasure to become amused at the result.

"Do not cry, M'sieur Warburton," she mocked. "It is not yet spring nor are you afloat. When it shall be spring, just do not go near the water, that is all. But now you must hide yourself, for I promised you a surprise," and she dragged me, feeling like a fool and doubtless looking it, toward the undergrowth.

Leaving me behind a thicket which effectually screened me without cutting off my view of whatever it was that was coming, Renee moved away from me until she stood in the center of the clearing. She uttered a peculiar call, repeating it in a moment.

In response there came the sound of a great whirring and flapping, approaching swiftly. Then, before my astonished eyes, there occurred a total eclipse of Renee. She was the unseen center of a great white cloud, violently agitated, which billowed about her, besetting her with soft cries, the air throbbing with the shudder of beating wings. I had often seen giant flocks of wild pigeons in my wanderings through the woods, flocks that darkened the skies and brought the twilight at noonday. But here was something new, a great swarm of the shy birds which came obedient to the call of this strange girl to be fed and caressed. For, as the flock drifted apart a little, I saw them perched upon her shoulders, clinging to her gown, and one actually adhering with beak and talons to her hair, from which point of vantage she promptly removed him, transferring him to her shoulder.

Meanwhile the loaf she had brought was swiftly disappearing in the feathered vortex. When it was quite gone there came a sudden lifting of the cloud and a swift rush forestward. I came out from my shelter. The last of the pigeons, which was picking daintily at its plumage, being startled at my approach, rose from its perch on Renee's shoulder and soared after its mates. She stood alone, smiling at the mute wonder in my eyes.

"It is not difficult, m'sieur," she said, "though, of course, it took much patience at the first. They must be made to know that you will not hurt them because you love them. It took three years before I could approach them. I could only strew the crumbs and leave them, for they distrusted me. But now, as you see, it is different and they come to me. They

will soon be gone though, where there is no winter," she continued, with a note of sadness in her voice. "But they will return to me with the spring, for they have never failed me."

"Mademoiselle, it is wonderful," I commented with sincerity. "I have never heard or seen the like of it. My past experience has been that these pigeons shun humanity because of the slaughter inflicted of late years by so many men."

"Men!" cried the girl, with flashing eyes. "They are not men, they are murderers! Ah, is it not wanton? Poor white innocents, harming no one; desirous only of the right to the air and the woods; humble and gentle beyond all words! It makes me fair to burst, monsieur, with anger because of the killing of these poor birds, when thousands are murdered for what these beasts of men call sport! If one of them should fire into my flock—mark you my friend—le bon Dieu forgive me, I should shoot him; yes, with a good heart!"

This was spirited, besides revealing another phase of her many sided character. The sentiment was wicked—perhaps—yet charmingly so, and I frankly exulted in it, for I shared her honest indignation at the spirit of wholesale destruction which prevailed at the time toward these inoffensive birds. My own right arm had once enjoyed the pleasure of felling a miscreant whom I found ready to begin the unique enjoyment that obtained in those days of using a small piece of ordnance to cannonade an immense flock of the birds passing overhead. I endorsed what my fiery lady had said on the subject and so stated.

"We must return, for it is nearly time for me to prepare the dinner," she said at length, and, with a

last glance at the tumbling river, we turned toward the path.

At that very moment a shriek rang out close at hand—a yell of mortal agony. We whirled, and as we did so I saw a few rods down the river a brown form shoot from the bank out into the air, as if flung by some mighty force, and fall into the water several feet out from the shore, the surface crimsoning as the body sank from sight. My swift glimpse had marked the garb and pain-contorted features of an Indian.

Renee had disappeared. As I stood watching the spot where the body had gone down I heard her cry in keenest distress, "Mon pere! Ah, mon pere!"

Grasping my gun I hobbled as fast as my lamed legs would let me in the direction of her voice.

CHAPTER IV

JOHN GODFREY

I hurried across the clearing and plunged into the woods, heading down stream. A few paces and I had come to a spot where the growth was less dense. I caught a glimpse of the river hard by through the trees. The sunlight struggled through the thick boughs over me.

A sob sounded nearby. Turning, I advanced a few steps and beheld Renee in tears. She sat upon the ground, bending over her father, who lay with his head in her lap. She was wildly chafing his hands and imploring him to speak to her. Her brave self-possession all gone, distraught with fears for her loved parent, she crouched there, crying pitifully.

I hurried up, kneeling beside them. De Montefort was unconscious and Renee hardly noticed me. I felt for the old Frenchman's heart and was reassured, for it was beating strongly. The blood flowed slightly from a scalp wound, Renee trying to wipe it away with her tiny hankerchief. A moment's examination showed me that my benefactor was only stunned. The blow had been a glancing one, wounding him on the side of the head, having apparently been deflected by some means.

"Do not agitate yourself, Renee," I implored, laying my hand gently on her trembling arm. "Your father is not seriously hurt." In the influence of the

moment I had lost sight of the conventions, but she seemed not aware of my liberty in addressing her by her Christian name, or, for that matter, of my presence. But even as I spoke the Frenchman's eyelids fluttered and Renee uttered a joyful cry as he looked at her, somewhat bewildered but evidently not seriously harmed, as the color came slowly back to his face.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed De Montefort, struggling to a sitting position and feeling gingerly of his doubtless aching head. "What became of him?" His coat sleeve slipped back as he raised his arm and I noticed an ugly, swelling bruise just above the wrist.

"Of whom, father?" inquired Renee, bending over him with tender solicitude.

"The man who tried to kill me!" answered De Montefort, his eye kindling and his fist clenching. "He was an Indian, monsieur. I heard a stir behind me. I was returning from the traps, as you see," indicating some of the spoils nearby, "when I heard the snap of a twig and turned just in time to see a club in the hands of that damnable redskin. He swung for my head. I threw up my arm," feeling ruefully of the member, "and broke the force of the blow and almost the arm as well," with a grimace. "Still, I regret not the arm, mes enfants, for it served me well in preserving my skull intact. But the Indian, where is he?"

"In the river, m'sieur," I answered, and told them what I had seen. "When your daughter heard your cry," I explained to De Montefort, "she waited for nothing, but hurried to you."

The girl shook her head. "That was not father's voice," she said. "I did not take the voice for his.

I seemed to divine that something was wrong, so I left you, mon ami," with a mischievous glance at me.

"Then it was the Indian who cried out," I exclaimed. "Why, of course, his face showed he had reason for it when he hit the water. And then, he was bleeding. But who killed the Indian?" I asked in perplexity.

"I did!" growled a bass voice in reply, close to us. We three started, and, looking up, beheld standing before us a remarkable figure.

It was that of a man of great size. De Montefort and myself were tall men, verging close upon six feet and strongly made, but he dwarfed us as the oak does the dogwood. His height was fully four inches over our own. His shoulders were broad and powerful and his huge hands, gnarled and knotted with muscle, like the wrists above, indicated a terrible strength. Surpassing might was apparent in every line of the huge frame, and not strength alone, but the suggestion of that lithe, tigerish suppleness without which mere brute strength is shorn, like Samson in the hands of Delilah, of half its vigor. The stranger wore the rude garb of an ordinary hunter, with rough leather leggings. His cap of skins was pushed back on his head, exposing a thick shock of black hair shading a high forehead. A heavy black beard and luxuriant mustachios covered the lower portion of the dark, tanned face. A pair of piercing black eyes stared at us somewhat quizzically, as if the effect upon us of his sudden appearance had amused him. He stood like a Titan, huge feet planted with Jovian firmness in the forest mould, a splendid figure in uncouth coverings, mutely regarding us. There was something of latent force in the man which was terrifying. It

told of a sleeping giant whom it would mean destruction to arouse.

The old Frenchman arose to the occasion. "Sir, whoever you are, I am glad that you did so kill him," he said with a fine courtesy. "Pray seat yourself, m'sieur, for it is likely that you are fatigued after the killing. I owe you acknowledgments for what my daughter is pleased to consider my valuable life."

The giant bowed and seated himself nearby upon a convenient log. He began nonchalantly to plunge the blade of a hunting knife into the black soil and the manner of the redskin's death was explained.

He finished and thrust the knife into his belt, which we noticed contained another as well. "This," he explained, indicating the blade he had just cleansed, "was the Indian's. He stabbed himself with it."

He smiled slightly at our mystified expressions and continued. "I got here just as our red friend was bringing his cudgel down on your head," he said addressing the Frenchman. "I saw you partially ward off the blow, then fall. He would have finished you, but the coppery rascal then caught sight of me. I may say that he knew something of me, as I was once in his territory, to the cost of some of his comrades. He started to run toward the river yonder. I caught him just at the bank. He turned on me, with his knife drawn before I could pull my own, but I caught his wrist and—he stabbed himself. Then I tossed him into the river."

I entertained a vivid memory of that toss. I shivered inwardly as I remembered the dying brave, himself a powerful man, shooting out from the bank, between sky and water, as if hurled by a

catapult. What manner of a man was this who held such havoc in his hands? It was M. De Montefort who asked the question of identity.

"To whom am I indebted," he inquired, "for the favor of the killing, m'sieur?"

The stranger smiled sombrely. "Men call me John Godfrey," he answered simply.

It was enough. John Godfrey, the man whose prowess had made tales worth the telling for nearly a decade past in the Pennsylvania wastes and the forests of central and southern New York. Incredible stories of his courage and enormous strength were retailed from mouth to mouth among the hunters and trappers who traversed the yet undisturbed forests of our own region and those of Canada. He was a semi-mystic hero, the glamor of whose deeds had invested his personality with a delightful atmosphere of unreality. Marvelous were the stories related of him, and, in view of what we had seen, they were not overdrawn. Certainly in physical endowment the man did not fall short of what had been claimed for him.

We three regarded him with due deference. This did not appear to please him overmuch. Indeed, he shambled impatiently, like a disturbed grizzly. He had not volunteered the information of his identity; it had been extracted from him.

"We had not known," observed Renee, with her delicious French accent, "that M'sieur Godfrey was in these parts. We have heard of him, O, often, but mostly from yonder," and she pointed southward.

"My trade is in skins," he rejoined. "The settlements are thickening to the south. I have been in this region six months and like it. Pelts are plentiful. Should it become too thickly populated here,

which is not imminent, Canada is left. I am somewhat acquainted there already," with a slight smile. "But I hope it will be some time before the hand of man uproots these magnificent reaches," and he smiled again with a touch of that wistfulness that we all felt who loved the forests and sorrowed to see them fall, as inevitably they must before the advance of civilization.

After a moment's silence M. De Montefort, recollecting the amenities, introduced himself and us to the giant hunter, who acknowledged the presentation with a grace of bearing which contrasted oddly enough with the rude garb he wore, and confirmed the conviction in our minds that, like the majority, he had a history, but that unlike the majority his was one of thrilling interest.

Following a suggestion of M. De Montefort's, we turned toward the cabin, Godfrey accompanying us. As we started he whistled and there appeared from under a clump of bushes, where he had lain unobserved till now, a great, gaunt, black hound, powerfully built and of a formidable breed, possessing a fine intelligent head. The brute showed good blood and superior intellect.

"This is Gypso," said his master, with a wave of the hand. The dog acknowledged the introduction with a blase yawn.

Renee laughed, the animal's owner glancing at her interrogatively. "It is the name," she explained. "Such a name would fit a lapdog, so long, m'sieur," with a vivacious gesture of demonstration. "And such a name for that great beast, monsieur; pardonnez moi, but——" and she laughed again.

Godfrey's stern lips relaxed and he chuckled gently, looking down at the great hound who sat

with upraised head, devotedly eyeing his master. The trapper's hand stroked the brute's head caressingly.

"I call him so, mademoiselle," he explained, smiling benignly at Renee, "because he is so different. He has been with me constantly for some years. He shows it," pointing comprehensively at the dog's body, which was liberally scarred with the marks of conflict. "He is pure gold and he rings true." The dog received this with another bored yawn, which was probably affected, for I marked a betraying waggle of his tail.

As we proceeded in single file along the trail toward the cabin Godfrey commented upon the presence of the Indian thereabouts at that time. For some years the settlers had been comparatively free from attack by them, as the redskins were growing scarce in that region.

"He was from a certain tribe in the province of Upper Canada," said Godfrey. "I knew him and he knew me, for I was there on a certain occasion. They have not forgotten, it seems," and he laughed slightly. "As for his being here at this time, there will be more of them later. There will soon be trouble between this country and England, and these devils, you may be sure, are spying for the British. The frontier will be overrun with them, I fear, but there's one less," his teeth clicking. "Of course, his only object in killing you, m'sieur, was to gratify his fiend's appetite for bringing blood from behind." It was plain that the famous hunter had no love for this particular breed of savages. Bitter experience had evidently taught him better.

M. De Montefort walked without effort, experiencing no inconvenience from his injury except a

slight pain and resultant giddiness. His daughter, immediately behind, was tenderly solicitous. As for me, the rush of events had rather obliterated myself from my mind and I nearly forgot to hobble.

We reached the cabin in a few moments and after her father's head had been bandaged, in which Godfrey, evidently an adept in these little matters, assisted her, Renee left us to prepare the belated dinner. The Frenchman retired to lie down and Godfrey and I sat on the little porch, warmed by the gracious sun, and lighted our pipes. Renee's robin, grown sleepy, regarded us listlessly from his perch. The trapper's hound dozed at our feet. The tobacco was deliciously aromatic; we inhaled it hungrily.

The trapper sat with his great legs comfortably extended, his hands clasped back of his head, his cap off, puffing with indolent satisfaction. The smoke wreathes curled and wavered. We watched them, all things mellowing through the blue haze.

There were golden silences, broken only by an occasional laconic question by the trapper concerning myself. Answering as briefly at the first, the mild intoxication of the nicotine prevailed and I told him all about myself, a tale which after all might have been told in fewer words than I employed, for I was young. But he only smiled and nodded occasionally, though I noticed that he responded with no confidences in return. He only smoked, blinking lazily in the sunlight, saying nothing. I was eager to hear some of the strange tales he could tell if he would. I waited the moving of the spirit. It remained quiescent.

At that moment the hound crouched at our feet, growled menacingly. We looked up.

CHAPTER V

A BRAVO AND A BOND

Some paces away a man stood watching us, or rather, Godfrey, for I perceived that he paid little attention to me. As he caught sight of the newcomer I heard a sharp intake of breath from my companion, but as I looked toward him his face was inscrutable. He was surveying the man before him with an impersonal and listless curiosity. For his part, the stranger gazed at the trapper in a manner that was patently vindictive. The two stared at each other without words, the hush pregnant with a something which I felt I could not fathom. I knew instinctively that into the present there had leaped without warning some drama of the past.

The stranger was not of ordinary appearance. A greater contrast physically to Godfrey it would have been difficult to find. The man was short, his height not exceeding five and a half feet, but his breadth of shoulder and depth of chest were enormous. He was dressed in rough hunting garb, which did not hide the evidences of herculean strength, for the massive frame indicated colossal power. A short, thick, bull neck, coarsely red, jutted from between the hulking shoulders supporting a round small head on either side of which protruded a great bat-like ear. A snarled mane of coarse red hair hung unkempt from under the peak of the battered cap,

while a thick beard and moustache of like hue concealed the mouth and lower portion of the face, an office which I mentally conjectured was a kindness. The eyes were strangely narrow, deep set and shifty. They were craftily yellow in tint, like a cat's, and blinked uncannily in the sunlight. The brow was low to brutishness and the skin of the face and great calloused paws was of an ugly blotchy red. The whole expression was infinitely sinister and forbidding. He carried a rifle and a knife and pistol was thrust in his belt. I noticed that one foot was somewhat deformed and he moved with a slight limp.

"The forests of this northern country are plentiful in game," he said finally, addressing Godfrey, his strange eyes gleaming fitfully in a series of feline blinks. "I am myself trying my fortune," with a significant glance, the import of which my companion evidently guessed.

I could have yelled aloud in my surprise. The voice of this monster, for he was nothing else, was a revelation. Rich, deep toned, vibrant, it rolled from his coarse lips like the swelling notes of an organ. Never was such an anomaly. Repulsive and hideous in personality to the last degree, one would expect a snarling harshness to proceed from his opened mouth, yet here was sonorous music. It was nature's compensation, flung doubtless at the last in remorse for her otherwise horrible handiwork.

"As you say," dryly rejoined Godfrey, stretching his legs with a yawn, "these woods are plentiful in game. My experience among them has not been small and I have shot and trapped many varieties. But still," a sudden flame leaping from his eyes,

"I sometimes have the good fortune to secure the pelt of a new beast, hitherto unmet in these parts."

It was a shaft and it struck home. The ugly face grew livid and the hairy hand darted swiftly toward the belt. John's fingers flew in a similar direction. A swift duel with the eyes and the stranger's hand dropped to his side. Godfrey's followed suit, his face impassive but a baleful light in his black eyes.

"The more varieties the merrier, good sir," responded the stranger, with a forced grin that curled the corners of his lips into a snarl like an angry dog's. "I shall take the more pleasure in skinning them," his vicious grin spreading like a foul, dank fog. "But, tell me, gentlemen, for I am somewhat strange to these regions, how far am I from the settlement of Watertown?"

"A day's journey or two," replied Godfrey, anticipating me. "Follow this stream till it reaches the Kahuahgo, then that water down. You might float down," he added with grim suggestion, his expression indicating the grisly nature of the pleasantry.

"No, I thank you," answered the unwelcomed guest, with sarcastic comprehension. "I prefer the banks. They are safer."

"No surer," muttered the trapper with slow meaning. "But tell, us," he inquired suddenly "with whom we have the honor to converse."

"William Barclay, gameseeker, at your service," promptly replied the visitor, with a cunning glance of challenge at Godfrey. "I am lying shamelessly," so the glance told us, "but for reasons that are good you will not say so."

Nor did he. He stared at the fellow a moment with grim amusement. "You may be sure I am

glad to meet you, Mr. Barclay," he said sarcastically, "I hope that in the not distant future we shall be accorded the pleasure of meeting again."

"I share your wish," replied the visitor, his strange voice enriched with a throb of unmistakable intensity. Again I was struck by the indescribable contrast between the voice and the hateful personality. The one pulsed with music, and the other was a foul discord in the midst of the autumnal beauty surrounding us. The hideous face was just now eloquent with malevolence unmasked; little red devils danced in the venomous eyes that were turned on Godfrey. He seemed a wild beast, ready to rend and tear for the mere glut of bloodletting—till he spoke. Then you wondered.

For his voice possessed not only natural beauty, but it was replete with those acquired graces that come of Christian culture and a previous environment oddly out of keeping with the present position of the graceless owner. Villain was writ, as it had been graven on stone tablets, upon his sin-scarred face, yet his enunciation revealed the purist, while such was the round, full utterance, the polished precision of pronunciation and expression of that voice that a blind man had listened spellbound and beheld, mirrored in the retina of the mind, a demigod.

At this moment there was a slight stir behind us and we turned to behold Renee, who had just emerged from the kitchen, the door of which had been closed. "Dinner will be ready shortly, messieurs," she said. She paused abruptly, her eyes widening, unpleasantly startled. In deference to fellow beings, trapper Barclay should have gone masked.

"This, mademoiselle," said Godfrey, with ironical courtesy, "is one William Barclay, a trapper who is new to these parts. We have been holding pleasant parley with him."

As Renee appeared, the fellow glanced at her with a carelessness which changed to a swift, certain interest. Then his gaze deepened with a base, brutal admiration. The light hazel eyes, yellowish and catlike, leered; the lips parted coarsely. I clenched my fist voluntarily; there came from Godfrey a low growl of disgust.

The girl, disconcerted at the creature's gaze, glanced nervously toward us. "The dinner will soon be prepared," she murmured. "Perhaps,—"

"Our friend has not the time for dinner," interrupted Godfrey, answering for him with cool urbanity. "It is necessary for him to be moving down stream at once, for time presses. He has a risky mission to perform and must get his meals mostly with his gun in the forest, so has not the time for amenities. He must leave us at once, there is scant time for adieux. Is it not so, Barclay?"

"Quite so, I must be leaving," assented the badgered blackguard, casting a venomous look at Godfrey to my great diversion. I noticed Renee's start of surprise upon hearing his voice. Murmuring some quite unfelt regret at his inability to remain, she returned, gladly enough I made no doubt, to the kitchen, closing the door.

Without a word, but with a look of hatred toward Godfrey, who returned it with insolent amusement, the man who called himself Barclay turned to go. In his path stood Godfrey's hound, surveying him with eyes of enmity, born I judge of the honest contempt which a good dog always feels for a human

cur whom he gauges. The dumb animal appeared suddenly to anger the inferior one, who kicked the poor brute full in the mouth. The hound sprang forward, the fellow leaping to one side, swinging his gun overhead in order to brain the dog.

I jumped to my feet, but, with a bound like a released spring, Godfrey was by me. In a flash, before the clubbed stock could descend, he had reached the stranger and seized the barrel of his weapon with two furious hands. For a breathless moment the two giants, so oddly dissimilar, swayed in a savage, muscle-cracking fight for the rifle, shifting grips in the attempt to wrest it from one another's hands. For my part I watched them fascinated, while holding back with difficulty the maddened dog, who with furious growls sought participation. The veins bulged in the necks of the struggling men, the breath hissing serpent-like from between their bared teeth.

In a brief moment, however, the enormous leverage of Godfrey's giant arms told. The rifle swung slowly over, then, with a powerful twist, it was wrenched from its owner's hands. Godfrey hurled it clean across the clearing into the woods. Then, doubling his fist, he drove it with fearful force straight into the mouth of his opponent. The man fell like a log, an oath, together with much blood, bubbling from his mutilated lips.

"That is for my hound," said Godfrey, grimly. "And now, damn you, go!" he demanded, bending over his prostrate enemy, his voice low with terrible passion. "Go while you can crawl, before I forget that God lives and steal His privilege of sending your soul to hell! My patience is done! Leave here before you join your dead devil in the river yonder,

for if you do not, by God, there will be the blood of two men on my hands this day!"

The wretch slowly scrambled to his feet, impotent fury blasting his horrible face like a flame. The crushed, swelling lips, with shreds of torn flesh hanging from them, parted painfully in a grin like a dog's, a grotesque grin of hate. The yellow eyes shot murderous malice, but, deep down in them, there cowered a deadly fear. He swayed unsteadily a moment and viciously spat out a couple of loosened fangs. Then, with a last look of malice and all uncharitableness, he turned, still wordless, and slunk away to the forest.

Godfrey drew a big breath as the burly figure was lost to sight. He clenched his great fist and let it fall softly to his side, a silent gesture loud with eloquence.

"I should have killed him," he muttered, "but his black blood is for other hands than mine." We returned silently to the rude porch and sat down.

Inside we could hear the hiss of steam that rose from the ponderous, iron teakettle. There was the faint clatter of crockery; swift, light steps; the vague sounds of the mysterious bustle that pertains to the cuisine. From another part of the interior there came, at measured intervals, a long drawn, droning note; weird, inexpressibly mournful. It was unmistakable. His daughter's father was snoring.

The little drama had fortunately disturbed neither of them, and indeed it had not been an unduly noisy one. Godfrey's voice when in extreme anger was not of the blatting and roaring variety. It was far more dangerous, dropping to a low intensity of rage which was apt to congeal the object of his ire.

The hound, being made of stern stuff, made no outcry over his hurt other than guttural growls of resentment. So, to our relief, the sight of the spirited occurrence had been limited to ourselves.

Godfrey sat regarding some badly skinned knuckles. They reminded him of the dog. He called the poor brute, who with bloody jowl came to him.

Godfrey inserted a thumb and opened the dog's jaws. "He kicked out one of your teeth," he observed reflectively, feeling of the broken fang, "but don't you mind. He's lost two." The dog whined and licked the sore knuckles.

I had wondered, since the trapper's outburst during the encounter, at his reference to the Indian who had been with the stranger. I had noticed that the bravo's fear had grown at the words. It was evident that Godfrey knew much about the nearly simultaneous appearance of these two unclean birds. I wanted to ask him for an explanation, but the trapper was hardly one from whom to extract confidences. I waited for him to volunteer them; waited indefinitely. He sat with one leg thrown over the other; hands clasping a bony knee; black eyes fixed sombrely upon the glowing forest; eyes that were dimmed with the wistful shadow that sometimes falls, veiling the vision, blotting out for a breath the dearth of the present moment for some glad, returning mirage of the dear, dead past; a mirage glorified and given substance by some dim and tender memory, creeping from its dark cell into transitory light and life.

A feminine rustle roused us. "Dinner is finally ready, messieurs," Renee's voice was saying. "Tell me, are you not famished? Where is that horrible

man? Or is he a friend of yours?" she flushed, regarding Godfrey.

Godfrey glanced at me, his sombre face relaxing, "My acquaintance is large, mam'selle," he responded, "but my friends are few. The man is one I happened to strike in the woods shortly since. He is gone."

I choked slightly and grew red. Mademoiselle, unsuspecting, glanced at me with solicitude. Had I swallowed something?

"Not yet," I told her, "but I am quite ready to." She was contrite. "We must delay no longer!" she exclaimed. "You must both be starved!" Her voice rang out in summons. "Father!" she called "It is to dine!"

A sleepy voice answered her, and while Godfrey and I were making our ablutions the old Frenchman appeared, breaking off a prodigious yawn in the middle with native consideration as he saw us. We drew up and sat down before the table, which was spread in the living room. All things were good. We ate them.

The tinkle of cutlery rang a summons on the plates, whereat Godfrey's hound appeared sniffing in the now open doorway, eyeing us wistfully. Renee's robin also poked his impudent nose inside, and fluttering awkwardly to a point of vantage on her shoulder, swaggered there insolently, staring at us with bold eyes. Godfrey was introduced to him, but even then the bird was unimpressed, emerging from his boredom only when his mistress began to feed him. He was always eating.

Since my enforced stay at the cabin I had rejoiced in a languid appetite, as became an invalid. But my stroll, with its attending incidents, had aroused

the sleeping monster, who clamored and would not be denied. I passed my plate for more and in a moment blushed to find it gone. I remembered with wholesome shame that it was the third time.

Godfrey continued to pass his with philosophic calm. I regarded him with envy. He had evidently long since accepted his appetite as a stubborn fact, and, with resignation, made the most of it. I was not yet hardened, being a younger man, and my conscience troubled me. Renee, quietly imperturbable, continued without respite to pass our plates on to her father, managing by diligence between while to supply herself and the bird, which chirped greedily upon her shoulder. A low whine implored her. She tossed a fragment deftly through the open door. There was a whirl and a scramble; the dog's tail vanishing, waved a benediction.

The Frenchman was speaking, "My friend," he said, addressing Godfrey, "I hope you may remain with us some days. This poor place is not unknown to a great many of the men who seek their sustenance in the forest of this region, and I, need hardly say, I should deem it an honor to entertain the foremost of them all, particularly for the service rendered me and mine this day."

"I shall be pleased to remain with you a day or two," replied the trapper, "though it can be only for a short time. I am on my way to Sackets Harbor, monsieur, where, as you must know, there is now hostile preparation. I believe that a break with England is imminent. In such an event the Harbor will be of the greatest value as a strategic position. Preparations cannot be pushed too rapidly there, moreover, for I understand that the regular force of soldiery there is very small, while the ranks of

raw militia of this sparsely settled region need much preparation. Also there is as yet nothing more formidable in the naval line than a fleet of fishing smacks. It is my purpose, monsieur," he continued quietly, "to offer what small assistance lies in my power to the military authorities there. I have had some experience and may be found useful in some humble way."

There was a slight pause. "Mr. Godfrey," I said finally, "I was myself returning to the Harbor, from an idle forest prowl, for that very purpose, when I encountered the dilemma of which I told you and from which mademoiselle here so intrepidly rescued me. If you will have the patience to remain here a brief space till I am in physical shape to undertake the journey I should be glad to return with you and take you to my home. The struggle is close at hand," I went on, an odd thrill tingling my spine, "and, like all my countrymen, I am eager for it. And though I presume, sir, upon this hour's acquaintance, I can only say that I should count it an inestimable privilege if I were permitted to see this fight through shoulder to shoulder with you."

Godfrey's eyes, aglow with the fire that revealed his intrepid soul, gazed into my own. Whatever they read there, it is sufficient that in that instant the subtle something that once in the lives of some men draws two, the one to the other, closer than brothers, bound us and mysteriously linked our fates until severance and the end. Across the table we silently clasped hands, cementing what was to each a strange new tie. Friends in all and more than the word implies; friends through the gold and the gray, to the Valley of the Shadow—and beyond.

There was a silence. The great clock ticked over

loud. A faint breeze sighed humanly. The robin peered at us curiously from Renee's shoulder. Renee smiled at us, a tremulous little smile.

The old Frenchman's eyes were blurred. Winking them vigorously he rose to his feet with uplifted glass.

"Bien! A votre sante!" he proposed. "Et messieurs, vive la France; vive l'Amerique!"

CHAPTER VI

MY DREAM LADY

Renee and I watched the brawling water, furious with foam, rushing and rioting. The little clearing at the end of the winding trail had begun to look forlorn. The grasses were shriveling, the green sobering into a listless brown. A network of blackberry briers, hopelessly naked, snarled sullenly in fretful fashion at our feet. Each day the departing glory of their leafage left the trees barer. We trod upon a royal carpet of red and gold. As we looked, a sudden breath of wind quivered the branches of a tall maple that grew on the sharp bank of the stream. A shower of leaves fell, fluttering like gorgeous butterflies, into the water, when they were whisked relentlessly away into whirling eddies, drowned and draggled.

The morning air was still keen with the tang of the frost of the preceding night. Delicious as wine, laden with spicy forest odors, it freshened the lungs and fired the eye. Deftly as a lady's maid, it carmined Renee's cheeks and the summer lived again in the pink roses. Her eyes, the eyes that were like the sunlit sea under a cloudless sky, wandered afar, past the wood-girt shore, to the southward. Dreamily and wistfully they yearned for the vanished summer.

A week had passed since Godfrey's arrival. I had

been gaining strength swiftly, was now almost thoroughly fit and had ceased wholly to hobble. John and I had determined to leave for Sackets Harbor at noon of this day, for I was now able to undertake the journey.

I had risen with a feeling of reluctance to leave, and as I thought upon it my heart grew heavier. Conflicting emotions smote me hip and thigh. I would not have remained longer if I could, and yet, for such was my state of mind, to remain would gladden me. All my youth's hot blood was stirred with the desire to be at home, in the thick of the grim preparation I knew was in progress, and yet the imminence of my departure from the cabin made me sick at heart.

For a sweet face drifted in my dreams. Clear eyes gazed into mine and the warm sun flamed; where they were not, the shadows lengthened. Her words, like sweet bells, attuned my world to melody; the way of her slender feet led into paths of peace, into groves of a holy calm wherein nothing gross could enter; into the majestic cathedral of a realized ideal, with its vast roof that reached to the throne of God, its throbbing organ, its silent worshippers. There had entered into my life the light that never was on land or sea for any unhappy fool who has spurned the cup and put love from him. I loved Renee.

She did not know it, nor had I for long. It was only this morning, the morning that brought the parting, that I awoke with the leaden weight at my heart. I had wondered dully, in the instant ere full consciousness came, why the weight was there. My eyes opened and I regretfully remembered the coming parting.

The weight grew heavier and suddenly I knew—knew that I loved Renee.

I lay still for a few moments, staring solemnly out of the sun-brightened window. The sudden realization brought to me nothing of the foolish exultation and high fever of which we read so much and disprove so thoroughly. Rather I felt overwhelmed by a strange and solemn thing, something I could not analyze as yet. It was as if I had stood at the portal of a temple hitherto unseen, quaking upon the threshold. From within there came to me the odor of incense; music that soared, bearing me upon its wings closer to the stars; voices of infinite sweetness that told of a pure, white grace. Within were alternate bursts of divine harmonies and the fall of sweet silences. Without there led up to this portal a path that wound over sunny slopes and by green pastures from its beginning; through shadowy woodlands, crossed by little streams that gurgled carelessly; a path wherein the pilgrim strays, carefree and heartfree, till he comes to the temple.

And so I had come to the end of the path which I had traversed alone and stood hesitant at the door of the temple. My eyes were dim for the days that had been, for I knew that once within the portal there would be a difference. Even on the threshold a sense of a thousand austerities bore in upon my spirit; a vague feeling that approached depression; the gray mist that such a crisis brings. For the boy comes whistling up the path to the door of the temple, but when he passes in he is a man. And when one has become a man the boyhood that was seems doubly sweet.

So it was with solemn eyes that I lay this morn-

ing, my hands clasped under my head, staring out of the sunlit window toward the slowly opening door of the temple. I was passing into it. I reflected. To find her and to walk with her always. She might not be for me; it might not be so written. She might never know that I sought her in the temple. She might indeed—and my eyes grew troubled—enter it with another. And yet it was written that she must ever be with me to the end, even should she not give herself to me. For, looking in at the door of the temple, I beheld her image and I passed through and the door closed forever upon the path.

If it should not be that her life be linked with mine, I should always have my dream lady. Her clear, sweet eyes, Renee's eyes, should search my own and hold me true to high ideals; her white hand should beckon me in the dimness of the temple, on to the Holy of Holies and beyond the sombre pall that veils the final and most stupendous mystery.

Ah, these dream women! Potent with power for weal or woe, how they haunt us who walk alone in the temple! The days are murmurous with their soft laughter; the breeze croons to the cradled leaves and in the lay we hear the rustle of their garments. In the emptiness of night we stretch out our arms to them and they are always just away. Their eyes, brilliant in the soft darkness, lead us on and on, perhaps to despair, mayhap to peace. It seemed then that for the latter there was the greatest consummation, in that one was led into a fair world, a world of tenderness and trust, of gentleness unknowable.

And so it was Renee; Renee to the end, in the fair flesh if God willed it so; in the pure spirit if its lovely tenement were denied me. In all humility

I aspired to her; yet if I sought her in vain, it was she and she alone who might lead me onward and upward. Sweet eyes, like loadstars, would shine into my own; a white hand beckon me; a clear voice, dimly echoing, would sound in compassionate murmurings in my dreams. Infinite tenderness, the incomparable sweetness of her would be mine, for it was the white soul of her that I loved above all else. Together till the sun be blotted out in darkness for us, till we heard the wash of the waves that rolled forever in eternity's shoreless sea, I and my dream lady. It was enough—or seemed so then.

So I had reflected upon my waking, taking no thought of time, which was rapidly forging breakfastward. In the midst of my reverie there came an incongruous interruption in the shape of Godfrey's hound. He burst into my room like a solid shot, and, leaping upon my bed, bedewed my face with affectionate slobberings, encouraged by the shouts of his master below. Exasperated at my delay, John, my lately acquired Pythias, had done this thing.

It was enough. My wistful conjurings, my lofty visions, fluttered away like scared coveys before the bestial onslaught. The beast, I was first inclined to cuff, but I sighed and patted him instead. I was unalterably recalled to earth, realities and breakfast. It was life. I dressed.

It was rather a silent meal. M. De Montefort's manner showed genuine regret at our departure. John was silent and inscrutable. Renee was rather grave. The robin was clamoring greedily upon her shoulder and interpolating his outcries with chuckles of satisfaction, between courses, at our prospective flitting. I glowered at him and ate little.

The meal ended, M. De Montefort and John went

outside to smoke. I asked Renee to accompany me in a final stroll to the river. She assented. Godfrey's hound begged to go along and was not denied. So Renee and I sat on a fallen tree trunk, the hound at our feet. Renee gazed to the southward; I gazed at Renee; the hound gazed upon us both and yawned mightily.

Presently Renee's voice called for the pigeons. There came no responsive flutter. Only a few crows, circling overhead, cawed drearily.

"They are all gone," she said sadly. "It was bon jour and away. They feared the dreariness, m'sieur, the snow and the bitter wind, the loneliness of winter. Winter, how I hate it! It was different in France!" and she sighed.

"I grow lonesome here," she went on, a little catch in her voice, her sweet eyes moistening. "It is lonely in this strange, savage wilderness, where the sight of fellow creatures is so rare. In the summer, to be sure, the solitude is bearable, for it is beautiful and I have my birds. But in the winter, the desolate winter that buries us so hopelessly, when even the birds are gone! We live on drearily, my father and I, in the isolation. And we welcome the spring with such warmth, m'sieur,—ah, do we not! It is like the bear crawling out of his cave. The green things shoot up, the leaves bud, the warm sun shines and we begin to live again."

I turned to her, my own face shadowed. "Believe me, mademoiselle, I feel for you," I told her. "Our northern rigors are hard enough to bear, even for communities. For those alone, as your father and yourself, it is far worse. It seems to me, though you will pardon the comment in a matter which does

not concern me, that you would be happier if your father elected to live in one of the settlements."

She made a little gesture of dissent with girlish dignity. "My father's wishes in this as in all matters are mine also," she said. "My desire is only to remain with him, no matter where he may care to be. Besides, he has reasons for the life he lives, excellent ones, monsieur."

"Indeed, I had not meant to offend, mam'selle," I hastened to assure her, deprecating the emphasis of her final words. "My remark was prompted wholly through consideration for your loneliness."

She smiled softly. "And yet," she answered me, "the loneliness, irksome as it is in this solitude, is nothing, mon ami, absolutely nothing to what I once experienced in the heart of a teeming city, surrounded by loving friends, any one of whom would have done anything for me; such loneliness as first rent and then numbed my heart, though I was but a child."

She paused, her eyes darkening with a reminiscent shadow, her face paling with some memory of the past.

"It seems strange to me at this moment," she continued in a low tone, seemingly more to herself than to me, "this home in a far country, so far, so many miles from France. It is years since we left her shores, la belle France, and yet I can close my eyes and see, though I was little, every detail of that last night in Paris, the suspense and agony of it, and feel it all again. How, for so many awful days the Terror had racked and rent the city; the horrible, cruel faces that flamed with the blood lust; the trampling feet that wallowed, the gutters that ran with it. At the first, being only a child, I did not understand it.

I could at times see the mad crowds and hear fierce outcries in the streets from the convent windows, but the good sisters would lead me away and would tell me nothing. I wondered and was fearful, of what I did not know. Then one day I heard my guardians talking among themselves and I learned the fearful truth. I knew at last of the frightful Thing, and young though I was, my blood seemed to turn to ice within me. Then to my horror they spoke of my father, of the danger that threatened him through his connection with the court. They spoke of him in hiding, a fugitive with a price upon his head, the head they had fated for the axe."

She paused. Hardly conscious of my action, my hand touched hers and dropped again. She did not notice. The low voice went on.

"I burst upon them with tears and sobs, with wild cries for my father. There was consternation in their white faces; they raised and tried to comfort me, but I was like one distraught. The remembrance of the next three days is terrible to me. They seem like an evil dream. I moved about mechanically, with strained eyes watching for I knew not what. The coils of the Terror were tightening about me. They said, les bonnes soeurs, 'She is grieving out her life.' I heard but could not understand. Every sense was locked in that terrible loneliness. There was not a living creature within ages of me. The loneliness beat and throbbed about me; it was like a vast, intangible wall, against which I might beat my childish hands in vain forever. It was like a poor wretch dying in the desert, surrounded by interminable sands."

Again she paused. She seemed to have been living

over the dread ordeal. Then she resumed, a glad new note in her voice.

"At last they came to me with joyful faces. They told me they had heard from him, that he was safe. He was to come for me that very night by stealth; I was to be ready to meet him and we were to go together far from the Terror, to peace and safety. I fell on my little knees and thanked the Virgin and my Lord; I thanked my dead mother, who had watched over my father and sent him safe to me. They cried over me, those Christian women; they pressed food upon me and I ate like a little ravenous animal, for I was famished. The night came, pitchy black. When they led me to the gate it was so dark that I could not see him, but I knew the clasp of his dear arms and felt his tears on my face. I nestled close to him, and, with me hugged tightly against his breast, he hastened away. And we are here," she concluded, "in your land of liberty, m'sieur, in solitude surely, but a solitude that is safety and where there is peace."

It had grown very still. The breath of the breeze in the trees above us had ceased. The warm sun, for it was near to noon, emerging from behind an obscuring cloud, glowed upon us, boldly blazoning the glory of the leaves. The beams glorified the girl's gold-brown hair. The hound, with placid satisfaction, turned upon his back, and with muzzle aspiring heavenward gaped with pleasant inertia.

Renee sat in reverie, gazing far beyond the horizon, viewing the blue of other skies. I said nothing but watched her wistfully. Presently she turned to me.

"And now, mon ami, you know why we are here," she said. "I knew it must seem strange to you, but

those were troublous times and they were fortunate who escaped with their lives, wherever fate left them. As for us, we love your country, for she at least grants us the right to live. Tyranny and oppression are hateful to her and the mob does not rule. Believe me, m'sieur, we are quite Americans, my Father and I, je vous assure. And in this coming struggle, in which you and your good friend, M'sieur Godfrey, will engage, you may count upon the support of that portion of the French nation, as represented by us, who have been happily of some service to yourself."

I bowed. "The nation may well be proud of its allies," I said warmly. "So, mam'selle, allow me to make the national acknowledgements."

"Je vous remercie!" she laughed, with a sweeping curtsey. "Though I fear you rashly assume too great a responsibility. But listen," for a prolonged halloo boomed from the direction of the cabin. The hound was up in a flash, leaving us.

I arose with a sigh. "It is Godfrey's voice," I said with resignation. "We must be off, mam'selle, though I like it not. I would I might encounter another panther."

She shook her head. "Non, non, monsieur!" she cried, with a provoking smile, "I have not my rifle with me, and as for yours, I fear you would forget its mission."

I accepted the gibe with humility. "Your tongue is a sharp sword, mam'selle," I said, "but the case requires a heroic remedy. I deserve it."

We returned by the winding path, the girl tripping swiftly before me, leaping lightly over obstructions with her fawn's grace, assailing me with ceaseless banter. My spirits sank lower; she did

not deign sorrow at the parting. Fool! what had I expected?

Godfrey was at the cabin, the dog at his feet, talking with M. De Montefort. All was in readiness. Our packs were on the porch.

"I have been telling your father, mademoiselle," said John, as the girl and myself reached them, "of my fears for the future. I may as well tell you that the Indian I killed the day I came was a spy, a more or less accredited ally of the British-Canadian government. I know it, and am confident that others were not far away at the time. This frontier will be of great importance when the war arrives, and you may depend upon the British giving it much attention. Spies, both red and white, are constantly working on this side already to secure news of resources, and the strength, or rather weakness, of the population and present defences for the edification of their masters, who are wisely taking time by the forelock. Some of them," he continued dryly, "are trying to reduce the fighting strength by anticipatory tactics," and he glanced quizzically at M. De Montefort. "So I have been warning your father, mam'selle," he concluded earnestly, "that this place will not be secure much longer. I think you should both plan to come ere long to Watertown or Sackets Harbor, where you will be safe."

The old Frenchman slowly shook his head. "I think, m'sieur,that we will be safe here for a while longer," he said slowly, "though I thank you for your consideration. Later, if I find it necessary, I will act as you recommend." And with this we had to be content.

We were soon ready. After a light repast we shouldered our packs, and with rifles bearing them

company, took leave of our friends and strode away into the forest, the hound sniffing at our heels. At the edge of the little clearing we looked back. The old Frenchman waved his adieux and in Renee's little hand a handkerchief fluttered. I swung my hat in final farewell and the forest swallowed us.

CHAPTER VII

THE CAST OF THE DIE

There were many visitors at Sackets Harbor that winter. Strangers of distinguished bearing, secret agents, men on various errands came to confer mysteriously with the military powers that were. There was a feeling that the crucial moment inevitably approached. Strained eyes often turned toward the north, where, long miles across Ontario's waters, Frontenac was emerged in sullen preparation. The hamlet at the Harbor, insignificant enough, God knows, to be allowed to pursue the arts of peace unhampered, was of grim necessity designed to become an important strategic point and seat of war, for she commanded Ontario's waters from the south and was to dispute with Frontenac the question of their supremacy.

It was in November that John and I arrived at the Harbor, but the winter wore away quickly enough, for in work we forgot the drifts and desolation. Expedients for defence were sown that winter, budding in the spring and flowering that summer and thereafter in the shape of log barracks, cantonments, forts, storehouses and blockhouses in plenty. The little village of seventy families was being transformed into a military headquarters for several thousand troops.

The hamlet presented a martial appearance that

was indeed stirring in those troublous days. It fairly bristled with warlike bustle. Originally designed for peace and a snug lake commerce, strange days had come to it, days across which fell the ominous shadows of unknown tomorrows. Nature assisted in its defence. Up to the very portals of the forlorn little houses there stretched from the south the forest, affording an inexhaustible building fund for fleets and land defenses. In front of the clearing where the hamlet stood there rolled a broad plateau, terminating abruptly in a high, lofty bluff, at the foot of which the waves of Ontario beat incessantly. This wall faced the broad Kahuahgo bay, commanding any possible position that could be taken by a hostile fleet and forming in itself an almost impregnable breastwork. The harbor lay to the eastward, behind the bluff, while the bay stretched its long arm back a half dozen miles to Fish Island, where the foaming Kahuahgo, wearied from its turbulent journey from the distant Adirondacks, mingled its waters with those of the mighty lake. A long, low point of land, running out into the harbor near its entrance, was used as a site for a dockyard, being christened Shiphouse Point. Here Ontario's navy, which was destined to indulge in more display than actual exercise of power, was built. A fort, with blockhouses and batteries, was already in preparation for the protection of this point.

Now the rigorous winter had gone, the spring been gathered to its innumerable forbears, and the early summer arrived, with air pregnant with thrilling premonition. The gaunt shadow of war stole nearer and the people blanched though they were not dismayed. All along the Ontario and St. Law-

rence frontier, from Oswego to Ogdensburgh, they were preparing.

As it happened, John's efforts and mine had been rewarded with militia captaincies, John's through proved abilities, mine through good fortune in being the son of my father, General Zebulon Warburton. Of the honors attached to his name I need not speak; his deeds and the record of them are interwoven with Revolutionary annals. Just now John's command and mine were but indifferent handfuls of raw, timorous rascals, gathered from hither and yon at divers times during the embargo for service at the Harbor, which was an important port of entry. Worthless wretches they mostly were, useless idlers picked up here and there because too shiftless to embrace honest labor, and whose desertion from embattled ranks usually occurred simultaneously with the smell of powder. So our commands were not then a source of overwhelming pride to us, but we knew that once the call to arms was sounded there would spring up from end to end of the sparsely settled frontier the solid yeomanry, men with blood as crimson as the British coats. Indeed, numbers of them were already appearing to volunteer for the militia services and be licked into shape by those of us who had those rather arduous duties in charge. And so we waited in confidence.

Swiftly the days drew to the awakening. To this tiny village that sprawled at the very feet of a vast wilderness, crowding upon flank and rear, a thick stubble of beard upon the face of a nation that was alike a stripling and a giant; to this tiny dot upon the nation's northern edge was reserved the glorious privilege of firing the first gun in a war

that was to be waged for simple rights and human liberty. So the little port, pitifully small and seemingly inadequate,—guarded but by crude earthworks, forts of logs with the bark still green upon them and a grotesque armament,—looked undismayed to the northward across the deep—and waited.

Antiquated and insufficient indeed seemed her defences till you looked at the men who manned them. The color of the blood that coursed beneath their homespun jackets will not be impugned by those British friends with whom I have fought and drunk and taken pot-luck. And whether those compatriots of mine stood behind the hoary cannon that was all they had, or whether a hawk eye sighted along the barrel of a rifle or venerable musket, grim death leaped from the muzzles, for not in all the world did there live such marksmen.

John and I stood on the bluff looking out upon the lake at the close of a warm June day, a day that had been melodious with birds and glowing with the green of the life-filled summer. The sun had looked down at the scene of unparalled activity in the little town, smiling widely upon the tiny human parasites, toiling like ants. the ticktacking of the hammers sounding faintly in the luminary's distant ears. But with the coming of the twilight a hush brooded, broken only by the weird note of the whippoorwill, the muffled bellowings of the frogs in the surrounding marshes, the lapping of the waves in eternal mystery upon the rocky shores. And after a while the white moon rose in the heavens, silvering the waters, looking down inscrutably in the midst of her retinue of winking stars. Afar in the waters lay islands like muffled darkness, ominous

distant shadows, sinister and silent. And now suddenly a mass of black night clouds rolled down from the north, blotting out the light of the moon and the winking stars, gathering in crude, cyclonic shapes; creeping toward us and reaching out; clutching like monstrous hands.

John, lying at ease upon an elbow in the grass, stretched out his free hand toward them. "The menace in the skies, Gilbert," he said soberly, "the colossal hand from the north—a gloomy portent."

He jumped to his feet, stretching his splendid length vigorously. "It has been a hard day," said he. "Let us ride to Watertown. There is an electric quality in the air that demands action. Besides, I have a desire to gather with the habitants at Wharton's tap room."

I arose with alacrity and we left to saddle our horses. We were soon in motion. The good hoofs of the animals rang sharply on the hard road. Occasionally the spiteful sparks flew from a spurned stone, flung to one side by impatient heels. The brutes, revelling in exercise unwonted of late, carried us the dozen miles from the Harbor in brief time. We mounted the summit of a hill and saw below us, now but a mile away, the lights of Watertown village, sprawling in the Kahuahgo valley, the buildings straggling like toys in the clearing that cleft the surrounding forest, indistinct in the shadows save for the little flickering flames that wavered in the gloom.

Overhead there drove a mass of clouds, crushing one upon the other, sweeping to the south. Occasionally the dark hurrying masses were split asunder and the silver of the June moon streamed through in a white flood, only to be shrouded the

next moment by the driving gloom. A strong, soft wind surged from the lake, insistently, without respite, billowing our cloaks to our backs and fretting the spirits of our horses, who longed to stretch themselves in a punishing gallop. To their disgust, however, we pulled them from a sharp trot into an unwilling walk when we had come in sight of the village lights. We had journeyed at a sharp pace and desired to spell them.

Fireflies gleamed in the thick grass which fringed the roadway. The thickets stirred with nocturnal life. We descended the hill into the shadows. The wind winged through the overhanging branches, muttering weirdly, stirring the new green leaves. From a distant marsh there sounded the croaks of pessimistic frogs.

John rode ahead, his giant figure looming indistinctly in the gloom. He sat his beast with rare grace, for his horsemanship was irreproachable and he had demonstrated his skill by mastering some ugly brutes at the post.

"There's a big swashing in the lake just now," he observed, reining in his horse, which had shied at nothing in particular.

"From the looks," said I, ruefully regarding the sky, "we are liable to do considerable swashing ourselves when we go back."

"I don't think so," he replied. "I guess this is only a whisk of wind."

We rode in silence for a moment. "John," said I suddenly, "the time has come when M. De Montefort and his daughter should leave the Deer River cabin."

He glanced around at me. "True," he answered. "The scattered settlements, to say nothing of the

solitary cabins, are not safe now. War may be declared any day."

"It is strange," I continued with irritation, "that M. De Montefort will not consent to leave there. You will remember how little satisfaction Matison secured when he stopped there with our urgent message in March."

Godfrey laughed quietly. "The old gentleman will have to be convinced by heroic means," he said. "I shall have to go there and drag him away."

I said nothing more, but was troubled. Three months previously Godfrey and I had chanced to encounter a trapper, one Matison, on his way on snowshoes from western New York into the Adirondacks. By him we had sent word to M. De Montefort of the desirability of removal. If possible Matison was to send us word of the Frenchman's reception of the warning. Such word had reached us a few weeks later by a friendly Indian whom Matison had met, that the Frenchman thought the "need was not yet." I ground my teeth, while John, being more philosophic, showed his in a smile of resignation.

As for me, Renee was with me in vivid memory all through the dreary winter that she hated. I thought this night, as we soberly jogged along, of the fragrant summer, with a glad light in my eyes. She was greeting it, I knew, with relief, for she loved it. Her eyes grew tender these balmy days as they watched the green leaves; the soft air freshly wonderful, mantled her round cheek and stirred in her brown-gold hair; she walked by the winding trail to the brawling little stream and called. There was the soft beating of wings and the birds came to her; I could catch only tantalizing

glimpses of her white hands and laughing lips for the whirling cloud that billowed about her. Now it rose, now settled; finally, the last crumb gone, soaring upward and disappearing over the forest. Then she stood before me, her feathered court vanished, the sheen of the sky and sea in her sweet eyes, her proud lips curving in a tender smile. I drew closer, she did not shrink away. My arms that had so long been empty stretched out for her,—and she—

"Come, come, Gilbert, what are you dreaming about?" broke in John's quizzical tones. "Are you a sleep rider?"

I came to with a violent start, gazing about me for a moment in bewilderment. Several villagers, loafing at ease in front of the lighted tavern, grinned at me. We were close to the broad plaza. I alighted, feeling rather foolish and conscious of a vague sense of unreality, my mind-picture had been so vivid.

We threw the bridles to a stableman, who led the sweating horses away. We passed into the tavern, from which came a hoarse din of voices. As we entered there was a slight pause. Many pairs of eyes were turned inquiringly upon us; some rough hands went upward in uncouth salutes.

Mine host Wharton, Nehemiah Wharton, stubby, chubby and with a bald spot, came bustling up, radiating hospitality.

"Ah, gentlemen, captains," he whirred, for he had a distressing bronchial affection, "I'm joyed to see ye! Rode from the Harbor, eh? Breezy jaunt, I'll warrant ye! How're things at the port? Wot'll it be, wot'll it be?"

We told him and were speedily immersed in

foaming tankards of his good ale. Refreshed, gusts of the general conversation caught our ears.

They were talking of an event which had occurred only a few days before at the Harbor. The Lord Nelson, a British schooner bound for Niagara from Frontenac, being found in American waters, had been captured by Captain Woolsey, in command of a lake vessel. She was brought into the Harbor and condemned as a lawful prize. Among the captured goods there was a number of the belongings of a Queenstown bride who was on board with her husband, the pair experiencing their honeymoon. Captain Woolsey gallantly offered to restore these effects. His sailors gave up their claims, but others, callous to the tears of the fair, refused to do so and raised the bids at the time of sale to five hundred dollars. Glowing with a gallant and righteous wrath, Woolsey, who in his indignation thought he could afford it, raised the bid for that particular parcel of the booty to five thousand at one jump, thoroughly chagrining the covetous and bringing the matter to a sudden close. The government afterward discharged him from the obligation he had incurred, but, just at this time, he expected to have to pay it. This was the matter of discussion in the tavern. Opinions were mostly in Woolsey's favor, but there were some few Philistines.

The voice of one such was raised querulously at this moment, rasping like rusty hinges. Old Cyrenus Bantwell, munching tobacco, spoke and expectorated.

"This damn Woolsey," he snarled, inundating the fireplace, "is a damn ass, a lop-eared ass! What business has the damn fool got to be interferin' with

the people's pickin's? Ain't we the people, say, ain't we now, and ain't all the pickin's our'n? And here's this fool, this damn freshwater fool, goes and gives them pickin's—them pickins that are our'n, I tell ye—he goes and gives 'em back to fool women!" And he drowned the andirons in unspeakable disgust.

"Yes," said a ruminative youth, who sat near, with timid logic, "but the woman owned 'em."

"What!" squealed Cyrenus, sitting bolt upright, his eyes bulging. "Who owned 'em? The woman didn't own 'em, ye pale faced pill, 'twas the people! 'Twas us that owned 'em! They were our pickin's! G'lang with ye! Don't argy with an old man that might be yer gran'ther, but ain't, thank God!"

The youth, very red, muttered an echo of the thanksgiving, but it escaped Cyrenus and the boy was spared the emptying of more vials of wrath upon his luckless head. The old man spat and sputtered, damning Woolsey beyond redemption and glaring about with his twinkling, vicious, little eyes, seeking another disputant. They all hawked nervously, eyeing him askance. His tongue was terrible, it maddened them, but he was venerable; they might not thrash him. They must endure; some day he would die.

"What's this hell's talk?" he barked, scorching his mates with angry eyes. "What's this fool's gibber of fighting England? Who's talkin' it? Congress, cursed fools! Bah, brains was never in 'em; not in a mother's son of 'em! When they was born their heads went beggin'. God Almighty never did anythin' for 'em and now the country can't! But they're doin' for the country, curse 'em! They're ijits, ijits all! They're drivellin' about

rights, their rights and your'n! Rights! You ain't got no rights! Rights belong to them what has the fists to back 'em with, and that's England, that is! O, yuh can squirm, but I tell ye yuh get too sassy, ye'll feel the fists, ha ha! you hear, ye'll feel 'em!" He chuckled with tipsy laughter.

Listening to the spiteful venom, I felt a savage desire to knock out the little wretch's teeth and render him fangless. I knew my wish was shared by nearly every man present, but Cyrenus was old. That fact had saved him oftentimes; yea, from the beginning.

He had come with the first of them, at the beginning of the century, from where, no man knew. He was bitter morose, and, in the daytime, a recluse. He seemed to enjoy some obscure income, for he toiled not. An humble hut, on the outskirts of the village, held him during his days, when he was usually sleeping off the effects of his nights, which were invariably spent in the tavern. For hateful as he was to others, and they to him, the little Ishmaelite appeared to find an incomprehensible pleasure in the company of his fellows, which they cordially failed to appreciate, likewise to reciprocate. He would enter the tap room, his shred of a figure and wizened face imparting to those gathered there all the enlivening cheer of a funeral, and, taking a seat apart would cease to eat tobacco just long enough to call for grog. He sat taciturn till it was brought and more after it. Then, when successive swallows had loosened his vile tongue, he was wont to wag the member, interspersing its drippings of gall and vinegar with strange oaths, munchings and shrill calls for more grog. So it would continue till the

tavern was closed and Cyrenus made shift, somehow, to wobble homeward.

Ordinarily no one dared answer Cyrenus' remarks because he was Cyrenus. But his impugning of the Yankee fighting qualities created an indignant stir in the room. Cyrenus was laughing silently and rubbing his claws.

"Huh," he snickered, "to think of the lickin' you'll get if ye don't sing small before long! The redcoats'll teach ye!"

Then arose a voice, ponderous with passion; the voice of Noadiah Swanson, gallant veteran, honorable survivor of the Revolution.

"Tickles ye, don't it, ye little whiffet!" he sneered, with a look of withering contempt at the suddenly silent Cyrenus. "Look at ye, though, with yer face like a plate of cold vittles, all creased and crinklin', grinning' like a baked skunk because you think the country is in danger! If ye hadn't a head like a horseblock, ye'd know that one good Yankee is good for ten redcoats, but yer old fool tongue has been runnin' here like sap is in April, only your sap is all sour milk and you don't know nothin'! Damme if I wouldn't like to kick a man who will talk like you do, and I would, only you ain't a man!"

Cyrenus sat bolt upright, his jaw sagging, his lean face agape. The room was aghast. Never before had this happened. Cyrenus' tongue had been regarded with a superstitious awe. Noadiah had invited the thunderbolt. There was an intense silence.

By and by Cyrenus spoke. The words rattled in his dry throat. They were addressed to the landlord.

"Bring me grog," he said.

He sipped it in silence, his old face, with its thin patches of gray whisker, blank with ludicrous amazement. The words of Noadiah had struck him like stones; he was undone. He grogged mechanically, trying weakly to comprehend. An air of relief filled the room; an oppressive something rose and winged away. A tongued tyranny had been defied, an evil spell of years been broken. Noadiah was a public benefactor.

The hum of conversation was resumed. They viewed askance the huddled little figure sitting apart near the fireplace, or forgot it utterly. As for him, he sat motionless, his grog now hardly tasted. He seemed too crushed even to masticate his tobacco; his jaws idled. The little eyes were oddly filmy and staring strangely—back somewhere, into the shadows.

"It's got to come, boys," said Israel Thornton, addressing the roomful indiscriminately. "We've stood too much already, and when they keep on impressin' our seamen, spite of all protests, I tell ye it's time the eagle squawked! Congress is apt to declare war most any day now, and these gentlemen," turning to John and I, "will have all the recrootin' they want in a few weeks. I'll state they can have me!"

"That's the way they're all talkin'," put in Silas Putnam, to whose ear each vagrant breeze lisped its meed of news. "They're feelin' somethin' the same at Ogdensburgh, only more scart-like. You know General Jake Brown ordered Colonel Benedict to raise a company, so the colonel gets eighty men together at DeKalb and Massena and marches 'em

to the 'Burg. Folks at the 'Burg, ye'll remember, got purty sick of havin' troops devilin' and foolin' round there. When the embargo business was on in 1809 there was Cap'ns Sam Cherry and Tom Anderson stationed there with a couple of companies that was the worst devils, I reckon, as ever sarved in sarvice. Why, the citizens had to hev night patrols out to guard their hen roosts against the depperdations of their own sojers. When they was removed the people fired cannons and rang cowbells out of exceedin' joy at havin' 'em go. Well, ye see, when the company that was raised by Colonel Benedict marches into Ogdensburgh the other day, the people, rememberin' so vivid-like the thieves as came afore 'em, wasn't goin' to bake their bread of 'em, wouldn't feed 'em! No siree! The poor devils had to go hungry that night, and it was only by gettin' down to right mean talk and tall threatenin's that the officers could get the villagers to show horsepertality the next day."

"Guess they'll be all right now," observed Godfrey dryly. "Colonel Benedict has, I understand, sent to Adjutant Church, who is in charge of the barracks at the 'Burg, four barrels of pork, four axes, a frying pan and a barrel of whiskey."

"Too much pork," pensively observed Silas, whose nose indicated his preferences, "and one axe would a' been enough for the whiskey." Summoning the landlord, he assuaged a thirst that never slumbered, save in fitful catnaps.

The talk continued, growing more animated as the stimulants inflamed the valor of the gallant fellows and deepened their resentment against British bullying. Anathemas were hurled at the

English head. Scorching curses leaped hotly to grim lips as the burden of the young nation's wrongs found universal voice.

"You think we are in a position to defend ourselves as is proper?" suddenly inquired Noadiah, turning to John. All faces were turned toward Godfrey, for his fame had reached them in earlier days and personal acquaintance had heightened their cordial admiration, which was expressed in their bearing.

John's black eyes kindled. "All that is possible is being done," he replied. "With the men of the northern frontier to face, the foe may well fear. Gentlemen," lifting his tankard high as he rose to his full, grand height, "let us drink to the future success of the American arms!"

They sprang to their feet with a hoarse cheer, clinking their mugs. Ere they had drained them the door was thrown open and in rushed an excited man, hatless and coatless, his eyes like pale-blue saucers. "John Stoddard!" someone yelled, reaching for the dancing figure.

"Hooray!" bawled the fellow. "Let 'em come on; droves of 'em, armies of 'em! W'll lick 'em, by the Lord God!"

An excited circle surrounded him, clutched at his wavering arms, sought to understand. A babel of voices dinned in the smoke laden room. Above the tumult his voice rang out jubilantly.

"Don't ye know?" he yelled exultantly. "Congress has declared war! Brown just got the message!"

A few moments more and John and I were astride our horses, a dash of rain in our faces, riding hard for the Harbor. There was that welling within us which demanded action.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RECRUITS

Oh, Dorothy, little sister, how the years fly, like wind-blown birds at sea! The grass waves but to wither; the green leaf yellows, shrivels and is dead; presently it drifts downward from the gaunt, bare bough. Too soon the red in the cheek is blanched an ashy gray; the head crowned with snow; a breath and we who leave the arms of earth return to them, to sleep like tired children while the old world swings round.

"Ah, time and death, ye two malignant powers!"

And so, little sister of the early time, do I, an old, withered, wrinkled leaf, all yellowed and forlorn, cling still to the gray bough while the bitter wind snarls round me hungrily. The bough is almost bare. But a few survivors of the summer time remain, keeping lonely vigil. One by one, torn from their trembling hold by the destroying blast, they flutter down to the sodden mound of their fellows below. And presently a final merry gust will blow and I, too, shall be whisked away to join them. But till then, though the wind be cold, and I shiver and crackle in every fibre with its chill, the old heart of me yet will warm with the memories of my summer time. And of all these memories, what more gracious, little sister, than that of you? You who suffered and endured!

While I write I glance out from the porch over the broad acres that are mine, nor see them, for my dim old eyes, with the crowsfeet at their corners, behold at this moment only Dorothy as she was that June morning. Our house, a rather pretentious mansion for those days, though seeming humble enough now, stood a short distance back from the bluff, facing the rippling bay. The sun rode high when I awoke that morning, as I had overslept after a hard day's work. Hastily tubbing, I dressed and descended to the living room. There sounded the soft rustle of a gown and Dorothy entered, fresh from the oversight of the maids in the kitchen. Her eyes were bright, her cheeks flushed. I pinched them.

"Naughty boy!" she exclaimed. "I've called you three times. Great, lazy Gillie!"

"Never heard you!" I remonstrated. "And, too, will you please to forget that atrocious nickname? Gillie!" I groaned in unspeakable disgust. I hated that pseudonym, for which reason she loved it. Sisters have such privileges.

"What are you going to do about it?" she gibed, with a swoop of small fingers at my hair. I held her at arm's length. "I'm nearly your height and I can lay you out!" she boasted, struggling to reach me.

I straightened up the squirming damsel, who was now violently attempting to bite my restraining fingers. "You are not dignified," I observed, adding as a concession, "but you are growing taller."

"Yes, I am," she agreed, with an arch glance up at me. Her brown eyes sparkled, the sun gilded her tawny hair. "You're only a half head——"

"Say a head!" I commanded, tightening my fraternal hold upon her wrists, "or I'll——"

"I won't!" she retorted, twisting. 'I tell you let me go, Gillie, or——"

"Say 'Gilbert,' " I growled, clasping her wrists the tighter, "or I'll make you slap your own face!"

A big laugh boomed from the open doorway. John stood there, fresh from an outer stroll. I dropped Dorothy's wrists, feeling sheepish and rather young.

"Hello, John," said I. "Didn't know you were there." There came a sounding box upon my ear and Dorothy scuttled for the kitchen. I rubbed the stinging member ruefully. "Little vixen!" I muttered. "Pull her hair to get even!"

"She'll keep you busy, Gilbert," laughed John. "I see she crimsoned your face somewhat in trying to hold her still."

"People have been telling her of increasing prettiness," said I, "and she is beginning with the arrogance of her nineteen years, to take on airs. I find it difficult to keep her in subjection. Don't you think she resembles me?" I inquired unblushingly.

He regarded me commiseratingly. "I dislike to blast your dream of personal beauty," he answered sorrowfully, "but a dream it is. I should not believe you of the same family."

"My beauty is a tender spot with me," I retorted resentfully.

He nodded sympathetically and the call to breakfast interrupted the enlivening conversation.

John had consented after much pressure to make his home with us, but only upon his insisted proviso that he pay for his accommodation, though our circumstances did not render that formality necessary.

We made the rate as low as we might and keep him, contributing the proceeds to the good of the cause. The government had many mouths to feed and was willing enough to allow the militia officers who could find accommodations in the private houses at the Harbor to do so. John had consented to the arrangement only after much urging, intending at first to cast in his lot at the barracks. Our persuasions finally won the day.

My father, at last helpless for active duties as the final result of wounds received at Saratoga, in the flush of early manhood in Revolutionary days, sat at the head of the table. Next him was my mother's vacant chair, kept inviolate. Her portrait hung upon the opposite wall. She had died at Dorothy's birth and we had been reared by an old nurse. The devoted woman had herself passed away some years before, and Dorothy, charming and capable, was now the housekeeper, and withal my poor father's constant attendant.

Despite his physical weakness, my father's mind was as keen and alert as in his vigorous prime. Just now we were discussing the suspense of the settlers since the formal declaration of war a few days before. There were widespread fears along the frontier of an Indian invasion.

"I do not believe," my father was saying, "that there exists the serious prospect of a red invasion. For days past these parties of panic-stricken settlers, with the cry of Indians, have been pouring into this village, which has all it can legitimately do to feed its natural population. Their women and children are well nigh insane, and the men themselves, who should have their stamina, are livid. They have told the most absurd stories. In-

vestigation stamps them moonshine. Not a settlement has been disturbed. I do not believe we shall suffer from the redskins. What do you think, Captain Godfrey?"

"I think some danger exists," replied John, "but not to the extent that was first apprehended. There is a way to repulse savages if they come, however, which is to shoot straight and often. That the men of these States can do. I think there are points on the frontier that will lend themselves to attack far more readily than this. The natural facilities for defence here are unusually effective."

"When will the first blow be struck?" mused I, whereupon Dorothy kicked me under the table. I was minded to retaliate, but contented myself with a reproachful glare.

"It occurs to me," remarked Dorothy, with demure impudence, "that you two, great, lazy gossoons would better be out helping to make ready for that expected blow. You are certainly procrastinating this morning."

Thus admonished, we rose, secured and lighted our pipes and went to work. There were expedients of defence to be overseen and constant deployments of raw militia arriving to be equipped, quartered and drilled. There had been numerous accessions to our companies, which, however, did not increase our numbers though they added amazingly to our fighting strength. This seeming anomaly is explained by the fact that a number of the worthless vagabonds who constituted our original commands, of whom I have spoken, alarmed by the real approach of war, had considerately deserted. We made no effort to recapture them, for we felt the gainers by the loss. With our commands we toiled

in perfecting the scanty defences, drilling what time we could devote to that luxury.

I was superintending the work on some storehouses that morning when a dry cough at my elbow drew my attention. I turned and beheld a meagre face and a wisp of a figure, oddly shrivelled. Cyrenus Bantwell was looking at me with odd eyes; odd because amaible; soft, bearing no malice.

"Well?" I inquired, in a tone made kindly by this marvel.

"Captain Warburton, sir," said Cyrenus, "I want to enlist."

I started in genuine amazement. "You!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," he replied doggedly. "You see,—" and his eyes, losing their softness, glittered in savage retrospection,—"I want to come it over that damned Swanson. He ain't enlisted yet. You let me jine right now and then give me leave to go to Watertown, jest for this arternoon. I'll walk into the tavern, where I'll know where to find him—lazy gump that he is—with his damn feet tilted up agin the wall, higher than his head, and I'll tell him I've enlisted and that he's a cursed coward and dassent. Lemme do this and I'll be back in the mornin'."

I swallowed a smile. "But, Cyrenus," I observed, "you're pretty old."

The wizened little figure straightened. "Think so?" he cried, with a ring in his voice that made me stare at him. "Young man, I lay behind a breastwork of bloody bodies years before you were thought of! I fought all through the damn Revolution, yes, and afterward, and I guess there's enough

left in the old hulk for a few cracks yet! Try me!" The old eyes flamed.

He walked with me to the recruiting office. A few minutes sufficed. Cyrenus was once more a soldier. Once more, I say, for the words he spoke had momentarily rent the veil that hid his past. In that instant I had glimpsed a crowded experience that made me feel indeed a stripling. The ring in his harsh voice, the flame in his eye, had bared an intrepid soul. In that moment I knew Cyrenus to be a man.

No sooner was he enlisted than he burned with desire to be away, and astride the horse I lent him, he set out for Watertown, a malicious grin on his unlovely face.

Early the next morning a cloud of dust in the village street whirled upward under thundering hoofbeats. They approached the spot, near the storehouses, where Godfrey and I were standing. There lumbered up a heavy draught horse, wearing an injured expression, and from the broad back, which was sweating with the burden as well as the heat of of the day, rolled the corpulent Noadiah. Up went the veteran's hand in a salute of the vintage of the Revolution. We gravely returned it. The face of Noadiah was fixed with a settled purpose.

"Captains," he rumbled, "I'd hev come sooner, but I had to take time to put my earthly affairs in order. Which of your companies did that little swab of a Bantwell enlist in yesterday?"

"In mine," I told him behind my hand, my face crimsoning. The wasp had done its work. Noadiah abruptly turned to John.

"Captain," he boomed, "I want to enlist in your company as fast as God will let me!"

John looked somewhat mystified at this patriotic zeal. I winked slyly and he led Noadiah to the recruiting office.

A few minutes later up rode the wasp, an unholy grin on his face, fat chucklings in his skinny throat. He glanced toward the recruiting office from which were issuing John and the enlisted Noadiah. Cyrenus shook with odd, silent laughter. They came toward us, but Noadiah, catching sight of Cyrenus, halted, saluted stiffly to John, and disappeared with dignity in the opposite direction.

Some busy days ensued, every man at the garrison working with fervor against the moment of Britain's first blow. Its impact was awaited with keen anxiety, but for the most part, it was that mettlesome type of concern in which there is no heart sinking. We knew our foe, the ancient mistress of the seas, knew her to be formidable. But we remembered '76. We knew her men; they knew us. We hoped. Cyrenus Bantwell, tireless and efficient, had quickly demonstrated his acquaintance with military matters. We had made him a sergeant, and he was busy each day with the drilling of awkward but willing yeomen. One afternoon I stopped by the side of the old cynic. He was watching a squad at target practice.

"Captain," he said dryly, "these fellows don't shine on dress parade, but they're hell on the shoot. It's always been so with the men of this half-baked country, in her farmer army as well as her tub of a navy. That's the reason she licked the old gal from Bennington to Yorktown, and it's how she's goin' to lick her again. She don't waste no shots. Ammunition's high and she's too cussed thrifty to

throw any of it away. Damme if I don't admire her for it!" with a sour smile.

Noadiah had been exerting himself in John's company since his arrival and was also a sergeant. The veteran rivals had encountered each other but seldom. On these occasions Cyrenus would chuckle dryly and Noadiah would either ignore it altogether or bestow upon his foe in arms a glassy stare.

The days passed feverishly, filled with war rumors. Detachments of raw militia from the scattered settlements were constantly appearing, and, being equipped, were turned over to the minor officers to be licked into shape. The choleric Cyrenus grumbled at this, though I knew he was secretly revelling in the work and proud of the fine results which he undeniably obtained. Despite his gnarled and knotty nature, I was beginning to like him. The hard crust cracked at times and from the fissure poured the flame of a fire truly Martian, mingled with the smoke of a pleasant love of liberty. Crabbed and cross-grained, a long-time pariah, the kindled eye at such moments revealed the old man in the light of a leonine courage, of an indomitable will.

I hoped during those days that Renee and her father would be among those to seek shelter at the Harbor. I knew them too well to expect craven fear to drive them, but hoped that Fear's discreet sister, Caution, might whisper to them. But to my concern, they did not come, while the days passed. The suspense wore upon me. I longed to get away and look personally to their safety, but this was out of the question. A water attack was feared from Frontenac at any moment. I must remain at my post and could only hope for their safety.

Sullenly there was pushed the work of preparation, while our anxious eyes daily swept the lake. For three years had Frontenac been the scene of shipbuilding operations, and we did not know the day that the bulldogs of the sea would be upon us. While our defences were yet incomplete and chaotic, however, we believed that we were better able to protect ourselves than the enemy imagined. A few short months before, their spies had probably reported—and with perfect truth—that so far as any effective defence was concerned, we had not read the handwriting on the wall. But with the close approach of danger, there sprang up, like the green things of spring that swift fruition of concerted effort which is in times of distress the glory and pride of our national character, that character which is a synonym for resource. Already fortresses frowned; logs, still green, were evoluting into ships; defences sprung up as if by magic. We smiled grimly. The enemy's initial visit should be disconcerting only to itself.

CHAPTER IX

THE SPY

The sun, red with heated triumph, had dipped into the lake, leering a lurid prophecy of a sweltering morrow. A belated coolness rendered the dusk delicious. I reclined at ease upon an elbow sprawled in moss and mold, pipe in teeth, enjoying it. Above me stretched spreading branches, freighted with leafage in which awakening night breezes whispered tremulously. There were vague stirrings, shrill peepings; katydids rioted; lively crickets perpetrated lusty chirpings. Giant frogs, pop-eyed patriarchs of the pools, bellowed in the marshes, booming solemnly. Suddenly there sounded nearby the hoot of a derisive owl. For an instant all sound ceased, the orchestra thus rudely reminded of the futility of it all. But life is life for the living, in forest as in town, and with fine contempt for the feathered cynic, the colony again gave universal tongue. There sounded a muffled flapping. The cynic, with sardonic, flaring eyes, rose and winged away. The chorus became a paean of thanksgiving.

A tiny green serpent, wriggling into the underbrush, raised its head to listen. It beheld me and manipulated a small, forked tongue with impudent rapidity. I leaned forward, blowing a cloud of

smoke into its open countenance. It scuttled away with a resentful flirt of its tail.

I lay at ease, at peace with the world. It was a green bowered Arcady, with the village but a few rods away. From my vantage in the outskirts of the hemming forest I caught glimpses, through the leaves, of the embattled town, the log forts, blockhouses and batteries, the skeleton of a craft in building at Shiphouse Point; here and there rows of frowning if ancient batteries. Everywhere grim, red preparation, softened in the deepening dusk.

"Hell, swathed in friendly darkness!" I muttered and refilled my pipe. War is made for the open, the stark, bare places that man has cleared. The environment of the forest must inevitably render the thought of it a deepening horror. As soon calmly meditate foul murder beneath the vaulted roof of a cathedral.

Somewhere back among the trees John was prowling, with no particular object. He was content to prowl because indefatigable. He had performed a day's work that would have dropped most men groaning in their bunks; not alone in the directing of the labors of others, but as a participant, performing feats of strength that cleft the mouths of fellow toilers with astounding gapings. He had handled heavy timbers single-handed with enormous power, had lifted weights that staggered the beholder. Now and then, by way of relaxation, he would amuse himself and others by leaping out of a giant hogshead, chest high, with a good half-foot to spare as he cleared the rim. I was no weakling in those days, but I had not done a tithe of the work he had performed and I was dog-tired. We had strolled to the woods after supper, and, arrived

at this pleasant spot, I flung myself down to stretch my aching limbs. He remained standing, the splendid length of him straight as an arrow, stalwart as the oak which reared itself magnificently near him. His big black beard brushed his folded arms, the dark eyes brooded. He was years away.

"John," I exclaimed, almost querulously, "are you never tired?" I rubbed my aching shoulders, for we officers worked with the men in those anxious days.

Recalled to himself and earth, John glanced at me and smiled indulgently. It had been a boy's question, but after all I was little more.

"Why, somewhat occasionally, Gilbert," he replied, his black eyes lightening with quizzical humor, "though not often. You see le bon Dieu favored me with a physique and constitution somewhat out of the ordinary and my life of past years has not been such as to indulge pampering of the flesh and consequent decay. I have exercised moderately and gout and like abominations are still in the hazy, indeterminate future."

He was smiling down at me, his big white teeth gleaming between brigand's mustachios and beard, his eyes mirth-lit, the slouch hat pushed far back on his splendid leonine head, a shock of black hair tumbling over his brow.

I looked up at him with distinct appreciation. Where was there such another?

"It has been said," quoth I, "that the span of a day and night should be subdivided thus; a third for work, a third for play, a third for sleep. And you, do you sleep at all?"

"Four hours will do, five is an indulgence, more superfluous," he answered. "The rest of my day

spells work, if work there is to be done. And, boy, there is always work, work for the hand and heart and brain, a work that may be made play itself when you lend your soul to it. And as for sleep—he flung out a great arm with a passionate gesture that startled me, so incongruous did the sight of a strongly expressed emotion seem in him, who was ordinarily so impassive, a veritable sealed mausoleum of a man,—"why, boy, I grudge every hour that I am forced by nature to be locked in it, bound helpless, body and soul and brain, for sleep is death! Have you ever thought, Gilbert, of the hours you lie dead while you are yet alive? And only God knows of the ages we shall lie sleeping, you and I, mouldering in dust. It is an unspeakable irony, this death in life in the sum of our tiny years, this waste of precious hours as against the uncounted slumbering ages that will roll afterward!" He stooped, scooping a handful of brown earth into his palm. "Who knows," he continued, with sombre eyes, "but this was once a man? And so one day someone will idly scoop you and I, Gilbert, into the hollow of an irreverent hand, and scatter us thus," throwing the soil into the air, "to the quartet of the winds!"

I shivered with creeping spine. I was not overgiven to such grim thoughts as these. "God help us, John," I muttered, "but that is a horrible idea! And how many years have I been dead since I was born, anyway?"

His great laugh boomed. "I'll leave you to figure it up," he answered me. "I'm going for a short prowl." And he fell to prowling while I smoked. Presently the pleasant spirit of philosophy that

dwells in nicotine had spelt away the grisly spectre conjured by his words.

I heaved a sigh of relief. After all, my spring was at its flood, and there were to follow, please God, a golden summer and a ripe, mellow autumn. To be sure, there was the congealing winter, but I dismissed that thought with a passing shiver. It seemed—fond irony!—an interminable gap away. And then the path to it was paved with fair prospects, glowing aspirations, beckoning hands of fortune. And when such visions proved but false mirages along the course of life, there would always be tobacco. Blessed be the Indian, mused I, and refilled the bowl.

The dusk deepened. My woodsy environment grew indistinct, all things softening in gathering shadow. Overhead, through an opening in the leafy roof, I could see the awaking dim radiance of a gathering star in a sky that was growing darker, swathed in the creeping mantle of the coming night.

I yawned and lazily regained my feet, stretching mightily. I glanced carelessly through the trees toward the clearing and the sprawling town, a half mile beyond. Suddenly my wandering gaze became definitely fixed. Staring for a moment, I instinctively drew back farther into the deepening shadows.

A man was coming across the clearing from the Watertown highway, headed for my clump of woods. I could not see his face clearly, but he appeared to wear the uniform of an officer of militia. In this there was nothing strange, but I was struck by his peculiar manner. He had a furtive, harried air, which the protecting dusk failed to conceal. He had not the leisurely, swinging stride that comes of a capital dinner and an easy conscience. His gait

was jerky, betraying nervousness, and he glanced toward the village once or twice in an apprehensive way. Not a soul was in sight. He came straight on toward me.

"Now what the devil does this mean?" mused I. He came on, entered the woods and sat down on a fallen mossy log not ten feet from me. By that time I was behind a screening tree.

He sat in silence for a few moments, listening intently, while I, noiseless as a serpent, busily speculated, a growing suspicion in my mind. A spy! It was almost certain. They had been long preparing at Little York and Frontenac and all along the line. We at the Harbor anticipated attack daily, wondering in fact why My Lord Provost so long delayed. And this uniform of ours, in which the stranger seemed to feel strangely not at home! I watched him, indistinct in the growing darkness, ears and eyes strained, scarcely breathing.

Reassured by the continued silence, he relaxed his watchfulness with a low, relieved laugh. "Bah!" he muttered, "there's not the slightest danger. Everything favors so far. Ogdensburgh and Port Putnam are disposed of for the present and to-morrow I'll begin to take care of this place. Better stay here a few days, I guess, and then for Watertown, Oswego and the rest. Then here again indefinitely. It will be easy for us." He laughed again.

I shook my fist behind the sheltering tree. "On the contrary, your habit of thinking aloud, my friend," thought I grimly, "makes it easy for us!"

He continued indulging his convenient weakness. "Let me see,' he ruminated, "I was a simple trader at Ogdensburgh and Port Putnam. It was sufficient for my purpose. But here I must get much closer,

for here, such as they are, are the headquarters." His tone indicated a contemptuous amusement. I clenched my fists.

"I am in receipt of my Albany commission," he chuckled, "and my name and rank in this bucolic army, with all necessary accompanying evidence, are here," significantly tapping a breast pocket. "I think I am sufficiently posted and equipped. It is a risky game," with another low laugh, "but I hold the cards."

I stepped from behind the tree. "You did, my friend," I told him sarcastically, "but you have shown your hand."

He sprang to his feet. "Who the devil are you?" he demanded, rage and trepidation struggling in his tone.

"Rather, who are you," I retorted grimly, "who seem so ill at ease in the uniform you wear?" I approached him while he shrank away. His hat was drawn down over his eyes. I sprang forward full into a faint rift of light that came through an opening in the leafy roof above us, snatching off his headgear. With strained eyes we stared full into one another's faces. Then, for a breathless moment, we stood wordless, rigid as statues.

"You spoke a moment ago," said I at last, "of an indefinite stay at the Harbor. Do you not now understand that this would be difficult?"

He measured me slowly with his eyes. Even in the darkness I could read the challenge in them. He was no coward.

"What do you intend doing?" he asked, very softly.

"To turn you over to the military authorities as

a spy," I answered. "And to speak frankly, I am sorry to do it."

"I share your sorrow," he replied with sincerity, "but, not to keep you waiting, suppose you come on and take me."

"Agreed," I acquiesced, and closed with him. Back and forth we writhed, locked lovingly together, tripping over twisted roots, barking shins and elbows against tree trunks, wrestling fiercely for a decisive fall. He was tough and wiry and gave me all I had bargained for and more. We were of equal size and skill and it became evident that it was a doubtful issue. Twice I almost had him, but he slipped out like an eel. We stumbled about blindly, breathing hard.

I braced myself for a supreme effort. Breaking his hold, I threw an arm behind his back. Drawing him close up, I crooked my free arm against his throat, pressing the forearm against it as I drew him toward me. His eyes bulged and his tongue protruded, but in the critical moment I caught a foot in a gnarled root, and pitched forward, my hold relaxing. Before I could recover he had grasped me fair, secured a clever hiplock and flung me a half dozen feet away, head-on against a burly tree trunk. I saw two million stars.

Struggling, half senseless and bewildered, to my feet, I saw him making for the clearing beyond. I hurried in pursuit. There came a great crashing through the brush behind me, as if a bear had made it. John burst out of the woods, leaping to my side.

"What is it, Gilbert?" he demanded. "What's the row?"

Running the faster, I pointed to the fleeing figure. "Catch him, John!" I gasped. "Damn him, he's a spy, a cursed spy!"

CHAPTER X

THE CHASE

I was accounted a good runner, but John bounded ahead of me like a deer in pursuit of that scampering knave. With ringing head I hurried after him, but he distanced me speedily, his herculean figure fairly flying after the stranger, on whom he gained rapidly. The fugitive reached the highway with us in hot pursuit. He dashed across it into a clump of cedars. The next instant there was a trample of hoofs and he reappeared, dim in the darkness, astride a horse, undoubtedly his own that he had tethered there. He waved us a mocking adieux, struck the animal a resounding slap on the flank and set out at a merry pace toward Watertown.

I jerked my pistol from its holster. John restrained me. "Too dark and he is too far away, Gilbert," said he coolly. "We shall get him—and get him alive."

"But how?" I cried incredulously. "He has four legs under him, we but that between us."

"Listen!" he replied simply. Down the road there sounded a confused jumble of hoofbeats. Horses were coming at a sharp trot. John stood in the center of the road. "Halt!" he demanded, and three animals were pulled up sharply by a trio of shadowy horsemen.

"Lieutenant Grimshaw," said John rapidly, "two

of those horses if you please, the best ones! If we kill them we'll pay you for them." We swung into the saddles that were immediately vacated by the surprised riders and turned the horses' heads.

"Met a fellow just now who was in a hell of a hurry," insinuated Grimshaw, as we shook out the reins. "So are we, same reason!" John flung back over his shoulder. In the distance we heard them laugh.

We thundered along while I told John briefly of the encounter. "Curious circumstance, that last fact you mention, Gilbert," he commented, with a shade of doubt in his tone. "Very unusual. You are sure?"

"Entirely," I protested. "I cannot be mistaken. I was astounded myself. I think it was that which contributed to my undoing. I had not recovered from my surprise." For my poor skull produced a rankling in my memory and my pride of prowess was deeply touched.

John laughed. "Yes, this was the root of your evil," he assured me soothingly. "You would have had him else." But I looked at him, as he sat his horse like a shadowy Colossus, with lively envy. Had the unknown had him to deal with, there had been no muscle-racking wrestle, no ensuing flight for the fugitive. Strong as the stranger was, and he was as strong as I, he would have been a child in those mighty hands.

The good brutes under us swept on at a stretching gallop. We knew them for two of the best animals at the garrison and they were quite fresh. They had been ridden by regular subalterns to the Watertown arsenal that morning and were just returning after

a day's rest when John hailed their riders. We felt confident of overtaking the fugitive.

"It is evident," I told John, "from his soliloquy, which I interrupted, that he had just arrived at the Harbor after a day's journey, probably from Port Putnam. That is a hard ride over indifferent roads. And his horse must be a good one to distance these fellows."

"I don't believe he is very far ahead now," answered John. "However, the moon will be up in a few moments and we shall see."

We galloped on in silence for a space. Stones, spurned by the flying hoofs, struck fire; the shadowy woods on either side rushed by in broad bands of softened murk. We heard the agitated rustlings of startled night creatures; hoot owls screeched their protests at the riotous breaking of the forest quiet. The stars gleamed in the calm, wide sky. By and by the gloom was lightened, the dark way before us gradually bathed in radiance. The round, white globe of the moon glowed over distant trees.

"Look!" said John, pointing. A half mile ahead of us a solitary horseman was ascending a slight rise, his steed at a leisurely trot. "He believes pursuit has been abandoned," commented John, his lips tightening, the light of battle in his eyes. We urged on our horses.

The rush of hoofbeats came to the fugitive's ears. He looked back. There was no mistaking that giant figure which had chased him to the cedars. He grasped the situation in a moment, and shaking a defiant fist in the moonlight, he was off like the wind, crouched low in his saddle, head well over his horse's neck. He had the seat of a jockey.

"He rides like the very devil!" commented John,

with admiration, and, with his own body extended and toes well set in the stirrups, to ease his horse, he urged the animal on in grim pursuit, with me trailing at his heels. The pace grew swifter. We cleft the air like arrows, the startled night wind whistling in our ears.

We drew near Watertown village. In a few minutes, at this rate, we would be there. The horse of the stranger was evidently tiring. Once in the village help would readily be obtainable to run the fugitive down. If he got out of it at all it would not be far.

The lights grew nearer. The fleeing Briton descended into a hollow. We had gained materially, but now he swerved sharply, and leaving the highway, sheered off to the northward across a sparse, struggling grain field. We turned our horses' heads and took a low, rickety fence after him. "He's no fool, to run his head into a noose, Gilbert," called John. "He's avoiding the town and making for the Kahuahgo."

On rushed the fugitive through the grain field, taking a fence at the end into a broad piece of pasture land. His horse, which was fast tiring, caught a hoof in the upper rail as he went over, stumbling and nearly falling as he landed, but was caught up by his rider in a masterly manner and kept on.

"Good!" exclaimed John, with sparkling eyes. "That fellow has ridden to hounds, Gilbert, you can wager. He could keep house in the saddle."

A moment later we had taken the fence without accident and were hot after him. A space more and we were at the bank of the Kahuahgo. It rolled sullen and black with menace. Here and there

treacherous eddies whirled, eddies that could suck a man into eternity, for it is a murderous stream.

On reaching the bank the hunted rider whirled, heading down stream. "He's making for a ford," muttered Godfrey. Ere long he had reached a spot where rippling rapids, on which the moonbeams glittered, revealed shallow water for the river's width. He urged his tired horse toward it, but the animal recoiled. The rider tried again and the steed reared, all but unseating him.

With a curse that came faintly to our ears, the stranger drove in his spurs and was off again, along a rough wood road that began at that spot, winding through the forest, following down the south bank of the river. On we went after him, having gained materially while he had lost time at the ford, following hot along the indifferent course. The moon was too bright for him to escape us. We gained more rapidly now, for his horse was almost spent.

For two miles more we chased him, finally getting to within a stone's throw of him. John drew his pistol. "It is for the horse," he explained. "The woods are thicker ahead. We must take no chances of losing him."

"Stop or I fire!" he called. There was no answer save a renewed application by the man ahead of his spurs, with savage energy, while he jerked his horse's head toward the thickening woods that hemmed the river's edge.

The horse swung broadside and the light was excellent. Godfrey, who was a magnificcent marksman quickly levelled his pistol and fired, without decreasing speed. The poor, stricken brute stumbled and fell, lying kicking and plunging in the rough roadway. His rider pitched into the underbrush.

Hastily galloping to the spot, we flung ourselves from our blown horses. John plunged into the woods. I stopped only long enough to put a ball through the head of the floundering horse, ending its agony and followed him.

I found John staring perplexedly toward an adjacent clump of underbrush. "I saw him a moment ago, right there," he said, pointing, as I ran up. "And can you tell me where the devil he is now?"

CHAPTER XI

LIEUTENANT STRANAHAN

We stood in the midst of a wild, wooded glen, bordering the river shore. Great, uncouth ledges, faintly gray in the moonlight, loomed here and there about us and buttressed in massive, broken masses the edge of the rushing Kahuahgo at our right hand, the waters lapping the rock not thirty paces away. The flood showed black and sinister in the white sheen of the moon, swirling fiercely in swift rapids, fanged with white foam splashes, the stream hurrying madly forward to the roaring falls below. Our eyes swept the illumined vista toward the river, then again sought the shadows to the left, bent on the spot where John had seen the fugitive in the brief instant ere he disappeared. Not a sign of a quarry; only the sight and snarl of the brawling river and the trailing shadows of the glen, splashed with scattering moonbeams.

John smote a large palm within the other, an eloquent gesture of disgust. "I saw him right there," he growled, pointing. "I'll swear it! But where——"

"He's somewhere about," I responded impatiently. "Did you look there?"

"Yes," he answered. "Beat through there just before you came, but couldn't raise him. Thought he might have made a detour and gone toward the river. But he hasn't, for I would have seen him."

We were advancing toward the spot where John was convinced he had seen the Briton. I plunged into the midst of a mass of low, screening shrubbery. "Maybe he's under here," I called, kicking at random here and there. "If he is——" but the sentence faded in a startled yell as the earth yawned and swallowed me.

In the breath of time it took me to fall that dozen feet I had ample verification that the brain has swifter processes. For three reflections flashed through my mind in that instant; the first, that I had heard of the existence of a cave in this very glen; the second, a well founded supposition that I was entering it; the third, a conviction that I should find my quarry at the bottom, which he had probably reached as unexpectedly as I was approaching it.

I reached the bottom with a jarring emphasis that effectually stopped my ruminations for the moment. Then, somewhat dazed, but assuring myself gingerly with cautious rubbings that I was still bonewhole I struggled unsteadily to my feet and gazed wide-eyed into pitchy darkness. A grisly, unseen hand clutched me heart and soul, a slow panic seized me there in the blackness. Strained eyes that stared, so futile in the gloom; that strove yet could not see. Till I die I shall shudder at the horror that remembered moment brings—and pray God to pity His helpless blind!

So I stood, rigid in the dark, half crouched; holding my very breath and waiting. Every faculty was merged in one strained, aching, sharpened sense of hearing. The measured, slow drip of water from the rocky walls; far down the descending passage the muffled beating of a bat's wings. These were

all for a moment, but now there was something else, a vague, soft stir quite near me, that congealed my my blood and set an army of little, malevolent devils pricking my freezing spine.

It is a supreme test enough, in very truth, of one's nerve to do battle in the dark with some wild beast. But in such case, at all events, there are the eyes of one's quarry, flaming warnings, terrifying surely, but still serving as lamps to show which way the menace lies. But here, facing other human eyes without the phosphorescent gleam that spells a desperate reassurance as well as the gauge of battle; knowing not of the position of the enemy nor from what side the attack might come, whether it would be a repetition of the furious physical struggle of the hour before or a quiet knife thrust in the back; the unknown, maddening menace that the darkness held; all this crowds such an experience of seconds with the crawling sluggishness of hours; such an hour with the endless iteration of eternity.

A moment so I waited, teeth bared, glaring into the darkness, listening. There was a breathless interval of slow, cautious stirrings, real and imagined; the sound of repressed, soft breathing that seemed to draw nearer, the approach in the blackness of a muffled, murderous fate. Then my hand fell mechanically upon my knife handle, protruding from my belt. Strangely enough, I recalled the weapon for the first time. I made to withdraw the blade, but ere I could do so there came a scuffling, uncertain rush toward me and we came together. Instinctively I caught his right wrist, twisting it. There was a metallic ring on the stone floor of the cave.

For the second time that night we were in one

another's arms, well nigh cracking each other's ribs in savage joy at the reunion. There was something eerie in that struggle in pitch darkness, this grappling with an invisible force, which, though unseen, I could well testify was tangible enough. But there was positive relief in this proof of a strenuous embodied danger after the appalling moments of uncertain waiting. For a moment we struggled and then fortune favored me. With a sudden twist, I succeeded in throwing a heel behind his own, tripping him. Down he came like a log with me topping him. His head struck the rocky floor with a sickening impact and he lay quiet. I knelt upon him with savage joy. Revenge was sweet.

Now there came a flare of light, a quick scrambling and a pair of heavy boots struck the floor just back of me. Ere I could turn my head a mighty hand was twisted in my collar. Half throttled, I was torn from my victim and jerked to my feet as if I had been a mutinous schoolboy. I was whirled to right about face. The giant peered into my indignant countenance, holding a huge, flaring sliver of resinous wood in his free hand. The other dropped from my neck. He was all concern.

"Hell, Gilbert!" he exclaimed. "I thought you were your enemy!"

I gasped for breath while his eyes lighted with a humor that I could not appreciate at the moment. "Why didn't you speak?" he inquired.

"Speak!" I sputtered resentfully, rubbing my constricted neck. "At first you gave me no time and afterward I couldn't! And why did you take it for granted that you would find him on top for the second time? Had I not a score to even?"

"Yes," he answered quizzically, surveying the

stunned figure, which lay quiet on the slippery floor of the cave, "and I guess you've evened it. Dumped him on his head, eh? Well, that's poetic justice. Your own must still be aching." It was. I rubbed it tenderly.

"Not knowing the lay of your cave, I took the precaution to slice off an improvised torch before coming in," said John. "Let's take a look at this fellow." He bent over the prostrate spy, holding the torch above the pale face, which showed ghastly in the glare. John lifted the unconscious man's head, from which the blood was dripping.

"Jarred badly and head cut on the rock," said John, "but he'll be all right in a little while. Take the beacon, Gilbert." Stooping, he lifted the senseless six-footer, a man full as heavy as myself, with the ease that an ordinary man would pick up a child, and started with him toward the entrance. I preceded him with the torch. Scrambling up the declivity I inserted the beacon in a crevice and we made to haul the prisoner up and out of the cave.

John laid the stranger on the ground outside the black, uninviting hole, going rapidly through his pockets. At his suggestion I went quickly to the wood road, where lay the dead body of the captive's horse. I removed the saddle and bags and returned.

John was directing his efforts toward reviving the stranger, but without effect. "Poor devil!" he exclaimed, pity in his eyes. "It's hard, bitterly hard lines, Gilbert. He's a gallant young fellow and it was for his country. A risky job. And to end so before it is fairly begun!"

I realized his meaning. A spy, caught red-handed. I knew the sinister fate of spies. And yet—

A sudden idea seized me, an idea whimsical and

bizarre, bold as brass and fraught with gravest risks. I laughed at the very impudence of the plan that had flashed like lightning through my brain and was then straightway sobered by a swift realizing sense of what its adoption might entail. A whimsy, in very truth, that might hold death at the end, and a death not accounted among the most heroic of adieux to the restless world. I stood reflecting, revolving the mad scheme in my mind.

"Well?" John, bending over the still inert figure, looked up at me questioningly. "What is it, Gilbert?"

In a few words I told him. He gazed at me in amazement for an instant, then glanced quickly at the man at his feet, measuring him critically. Then his eyes returned to me thoughtfully, with a searching scrutiny. At last he spoke.

"You are an impulsive daredevil, Gilbert," he said slowly. "You might carry it through. It would require resource and discretion. Those I feel confident you possess, but you would have need to develop them. It involves a heavy risk."

"I count the risk," I answered. He remained silent a moment with knitted brows. "There is one vital consideration," he said suddenly, "which is to ascertain the extent of this man's acquaintance in the provinces yonder. I have the impression that he is fresh from England and was at once assigned to this work. If this is so, so much the better; if not, the undertaking, to say the least, would be very dubious. Let me see, his papers may serve to show."

We rifled his saddle-bags, finding valuable additions to the documents which John had already filched from his pockets. John then procured and

lighted a fresh torch and we hastily mastered the import of the papers. There were a number of official documents containing full information of the name, rank and purposes of our captive for our unique needs, together wth sundry papers revealing in full his secret plan of campaign and a number of letters from military and private circles which would be valuable later on. We glanced swiftly over the captured intelligence, after which I secreted it carefully. John uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"My supposition was correct," he said. "Arrived from England only shortly since, he proceeded at once to Montreal, where he reported for duty to Sir George Provost, who immediately assigned him to continuous secret service along the New York frontier. He met scarcely anyone over there bebefore coming. I see he attended to that little matter of an Albany Commission. That would have been a clever dodge—if it had worked. Moreover, I gather that he is left with a free hand. Though young, he must have distinguished himself in some way in this line abroad. Strange he should blunder so to-night, but the best of them come to it sooner or later. I do not understand from his data that he is required to report directly at Montreal at any time, but rather to communicate his findings thither unobtrusively in writing, and occasionally to confer in person with the military authorities at Frontenac and other towns on the lake and river, as the case may require. All this renders your idea more feasible, Gilbert, than it appeared to be at first. It was a pretty plan our friend had. It is sad to see it nipped in the bud so prematurely."

"Sad indeed!" spoke a voice. We started. The

captive had risen to his feet, regarding us, swaying a little from giddiness. There was a faint, rueful smile upon his pale face. The grim humor of the situation was by no means lost upon him.

"I trust, my soldier, that your head does not unduly pain you," remarked John, with quiet appreciation of the situation. "And such as it is, you may find some little satisfaction in the fact that the poll of my friend here is doubtless still buzzing from the effects of the hard butt you gave it some time agone." It was true, I felt gingerly of a swelling lump.

The young fellow smiled good-naturedly enough. He had proved his gallantry. He was now attesting his possession of philosophy.

"True," he replied, addressing me, "the issue is still undecided. We have each won a fall. The third must decide. Take care, sir, that I do not win the rubber."

"It is as God wills," I replied. "Though with all cordiality I can attest to your courage and your skill, Lieutenant Stranahan."

"Lieutenant Stranahan!" he echoed, and instinctively clapped his hand to his breast pocket. He swore with emphasis. Then his eyes caught sight of the rifled saddle-bags.

"My papers! You have them, then?" he questioned.

"All," I answered.

Involuntarily the captive's eyes turned swiftly toward the saddle. It was but a fleeting glance, but it sufficed for John, who had been watching him like a hawk. In a moment the giant, with drawn knife, had caught up the saddle. Examining it closely he slit the inner linings and drew forth some

additional data, which he handed me to place with the other documents. The additions proved valuable in after days.

"Learn to control your eyes, Lieutenant," remarked John quietly to the captive, who had made no effort to conceal his chagrin. "Later," added the trapper, "I shall trouble to search you still more carefully."

Stranahan was watching me with a curious stare, "You gave them to him," said he, addressing John. "For what reason?"

"Because he will have use for them," replied Godfrey.

"Because," I added, "you will soon have finished with your name, Lieutenant Stranahan, and, believe me, it is my personal regret that the fortune of hazard has served you so ill. But, at all events, you will have done with it. Well, I shall take it. I will see if I can succeed where you have failed. The impersonation will serve a double purpose, to screen my own country and to shield my operations in yours. If I fail, why my end will be as yours."

He had whitened to the lips. Standing in a broad belt of moonlight that streamed through an opening in the trees, his face gleamed livid. "It is madness!" he cried—and our eyes met. For a moment we gazed hard at one another, and my own eyes shone confident as despair crept into his. John watched the little drama with a peculiar expression.

"Blundering fool!" hissed the captive, through grinding teeth. "Fool, who has brought this devil's botch upon his cause and country!" He struck his forehead with clenched fist, raging against himself, though he was after all but the victim of untoward circumstance. We watched him in pitying silence.

The paroxysm passed, he turned to us, a proud resignation in his face, lips that tightened with the determination to brave undaunted the black shadow that was creeping toward him. "And I, gentlemen," he questioned low.

John's troubled eyes removed from him, gazing over the black, snarling river. "You," he answered, his voice strangely gentle, "are a brave man—and a spy. You know the fate of spies. God help you!"

CHAPTER XII

THE ALARM

I drew my pipe from my pocket and was about to fill it when I remembered. Searching in an inner pocket I produced a cigar, the last of a handful secured the day previous. It was more desirable for riding. A pipe was made for quiet and repose.

Old Abner Holcomb watched me with mournful eyes. Reflecting that a smoke of some kind was a religious duty after breakfast, and that the pipe might do for me, even on horseback, I proffered Abner the cigar. He shook his head. "Don't smoke," he drawled drearily.

"You chew," I ventured, with a glance at his splotched chin whisker. It should have been wholly gray.

"That's it," he moaned listlessly. "Don't have time for smokin'. Got any chawin'?"

"No," I replied apologetically. "Don't chaw. Just smoke."

"Yuh," commented Abner sombrely. "I see. Some same as me, only t'other way. Don't have time to chaw. Ort to learn to mix 'em up, both on us. Only livin' life once. Orter get all th' good out'n it."

It was a long speech. He ceased, exhausted, relapsing into silent gloom. I tightened my saddle girth, then lighted my weed. My mare nosed expectantly, then rolled a reproachful eye upon me.

"Hello, Mrs. Holcomb," I called, as that genial and rotund dame appeared in the doorway, "got an apple? The mare's used to it." She produced a russet and the mare was satisfied.

"Say, cap'n," inquired Abner wearily, as I prepared to mount, "wot day's this?"

"Sunday, July the twelfth, 1812," I replied, proffering the still nosing mare the cigar. She ceased to nose and assumed a justified air of distant dignity.

"I know the year," responded Abner, without enthusiasm. "And Sundays, I have to keep track o' them, too. I have to drive Betsey to church," with aggrieved pathos.

"That is sad," I murmured. Under the genial glow of sympathy Abner brightened.

"Goin' to be trouble afore long?" he inquired, as I swung into the saddle.

"Any day may bring it," I answered seriously. "Why don't you enlist, Abner?"

"Rheumatiz," he replied, woe knelling in his tone, "and farm 'd go to hell."

"If they all talked your way, Abner," rejoined I judicially, "all their farms would go there. They wouldn't own any when the trouble would be over. Redcoats would have 'em all. We need men."

"You'll get 'em!" pealed a robust feminine voice from the doorway. "And you'll get Abner. He's goin'!"

I shook out the reins with a laugh, leaving Abner clawing disconsolately at his variegated whisker; black, gathering gloom in his elongated face. Inexorable fate had knelled in Betsey's tone. Sooner or later Abner would enlist—and the farm would not suffer. I knew who ran the farm.

I speedily left behind me the rude little farmhouse set in a laboriously made clearing among the woodgirt hills. Above me the gray, ghostly, morning mists were lifting sluggishly, for I had risen early and breakfasted in a dim, religious light. I had been for several days among the more remote hamlets of the region, assisting in perfecting the organization of the militia from whose forces so much was hoped. I had been commissioned by General Jacob Brown to confer with those in charge of the several companies. Now all was in readiness. With the first blow that should be struck, the call to arms would sound and the yeomanry, summoned in haste by mounted expresses, artillery signals, and in case of a night attack by giant, flaring beacons, would rally from all points of the green valley of the Kahuahgo and its hemming hills to the defense of the threatened port. For the Harbor, we were convinced, would be the point of attack. It was the most important key to the frontier.

I had concluded my mission the previous day, and, arriving at Abner Holcomb's place among the Rutland hills, several miles from Watertown, had put up there for the night. I desired to leave early to reach the Harbor without loss of time, as the days now brought added apprehension, and we chafed nervously and looked toward Frontenac. I was able to gratify my wish for an early departure with no inconvenience to my entertainers. Betsey was naturally an inordinately early riser, and as a natural sequence, so was Abner.

My road, an indifferent one along which my mare picked her steps with caution, began winding sinuously up the rugged flank of a giant hill. The

grade grew toilsomely steep and I swung out of the saddle and strode on ahead of the mare, who followed me like a dog. Reared and cherished from colthood, she returned my warm regard in full measure and never failed me. It grew clearer as we hastened upward; the mists, like gemmed dust, vanished in the growing radiance. In the woods on either side of the rude roadway sounded the vague stirrings of wild life, awakened for the day. A cool, sweet breeze blew, pregnant with freshness. On we struggled, the mare and I, as the ascent grew steeper and finally stood breathless on the summit, the highest point in widely rolling miles. It was rockribbed and bare of trees, affording an unbroken view for leagues of the outspread scroll of the valley of the Kahuahgo.

The sun, faintly lurid through the mist with the promise of a heated day, was just clearing the eastern horizon. Behind the rock on which I stood there reared the dark crests of mighty forest-bearded hills, eternally majestic. In the foreground there rolled a green, undulating sea of verdure, the Kahuahgo valley. From the outer slopes of the grim, guarding hills it stretched onward mile on mile to the wide waters of Ontario and the regal St. Lawrence beyond. Just now the mists writhed and curled in vague billowings below me, a gray veil hiding the wide water to which my eyes instinctively turned. Presently the sun swung higher, leering sardonically over the shoulder of a monstrous hill. The cohorts of the mists were routed and ere long there were visible, cleaving the valley like a hand-wide ribbon, glimpses here and there of the tortuous Kahuahgo, flowing swiftly to its rest beyond Fish Island in the bay which was

christened for it. The few tiny settlements flung here and there in the green waste showed in lilliputian guise. My eyes swept the outspread vista while I idly attempted to set the probable exact location of a certain cave. I gazed toward the lake, but the gray mist still hung, an obscuring curtain, in that quarter.

A soft cooing sounded near at hand. Looking up I beheld a gray pigeon, peering hither and yon with wistful eyes. In a moment there whirred a soft rush of wings. A small flock of its mates flew by; the lone bird rose and winged away with them to the northward. The sight brought to me a tender memory which was tinged with concern. Why did not M. De Montefort awaken to the growing gravity of the situation, and seek safety with his daughter at the Harbor? I felt, because of anxiety, rather angry with him. True, wild rumors of Indian invasions had sent many a family in senseless, premature flight to Watertown and the Harbor during the past few months. I honored the Frenchman for being of a different stamp. But now the actual need of precaution existed. War had been declared; M. De Montefort must have heard of it. His house was a rendezvous for migrating woodsmen. Moreover, I was frankly interested in his daughter, which doubtless materially increased my concern. On one thing I was determined, which was to secure leave to go after and bring them as soon as possible.

I rose from the rock where I had seated myself during my brief reverie, absently stroking the sleek neck of my mare, who stood quietly by. I looked again toward the lake, miles away. The sun was higher and the mists had disappeared. The wide

water, bright in the sunlight, lay outspread before me, the atmosphere was now extraordinarily clear. Idly thrusting my hand into a pocket I extracted a small field glass, which I was wont to carry, and applied it to my eye. I traced the arching sweep of the lake far toward the point, some thirty miles away, where it terminated in the silver strand of the St. Lawrence. My gaze swept the grand prospect of wood and water carelessly at first, then became rivited on the far Kahuahgo Bay. I leaned forward, rigid, with strained eyes.

For five sail were entering the bay, close together, headed for the Harbor. Small as they seemed at that distance, like toys that one could sail in a washbasin, yet a warning premonition flashed upon me what they were. These were no fishing smacks. And even in that instant there came to my ears, faint and far away, the report of a distant gun, the alarm at the Harbor.

In a trice I was astride my horse. The way to Watertown lay before me, down a rough road that threaded a breakneck, precipitous slope, holding menace in the shape of probably shattered bones and a possible soul-quitting at every stride. I clapped spurs to my astonished mare and was off like the wind.

CHAPTER XIII

A BROKEN SABBATH

The little gods who watch over the reckless were kept busy during that descent. The mare flew like a mad thing, her hoofs spurning myriads of stones that came rattling after us down the slope, the environing woods rushed dizzily past. We reached the bottom by a miracle in safety. I felt lke Israel Putnam, whose escape ahorse from the enemy down a rough series of stone steps, during our former argument with the British, had become famous. The mare now forged ahead at a stretching gallop for Watertown. We were soon there, galloping through the broad plaza, bound for the Harbor highway. Men were gathering, startled and anxious. The faint booming of alarm guns now sounded at regular intervals. The people suspected the reason, but certitude, of course, was lacking. Excited men bawled inquiries as I swept past. I shouted the news without slackening speed and left tumult in my wake. But a breath of time, and as my mare's hoofs thundered by the arsenal upon Columbia street and out upon the highway that led Harborward, there came the long, sinister roll of drums and the rushing together of eager, armed men, tingling and defiant, who would soon follow me. I felt like Paul Revere.

The mare, in whose veins the war blood seemed

also to tingle, forged on with undiminished stride. I shouted my news at every house I encountered, producing all the sensation I could have hoped for. Presently I met a mounted express, tearing along in wild-eyed excitement to bear the tidings to Watertown. I called that I had already borne them, but he was too distraught to heed me and kept on.

As I neared the port I encountered other couriers bound for various points, as well as some cowardly settlers who with their families were driving in hot haste away from the scene of the impending trouble. To the people's credit be it said that these cases were few, for the most of the citizens rallied most gallantly to the support of the militia and small detachment of regulars. Indeed, they fell to and labored with their own hands in the preparation of the scanty defenses and later united with the yeomanry in bawling defiance from the bluff.

Dashing at last into the Harbor, I drew up at the stable, dismounted and gave my sweating mare into the hands of the hostler. Then I hastened to the house.

Dorothy met me at the door, courageously cool. A leonine heart she had for all of its woman's tenderness.

"Why, Gillie!" she cried surprisedly. "Where did you come from? And you're gray with dust."

"I am the Paul Revere of this war," I explained, "also the Israel Putnam," and I told her of it. "Keep up heart, my girl," I enjoined.

"Gilbert," she answered with a bright smile, "while a woman I am yet a Warburton. The name is still unchanged." Whereupon I bestowed upon her a fraternal if dusty kiss.

I went into the living room, where my helpless father was sitting, and moved his reclining chair up to the window, which commanded an unobstructed view of the bluff and the bay beyond, in order that he might have whatever sight his old eyes might vouchsafe him of that day. He clasped my hand eloquently.

"I but wish I could be with you, shoulder to shoulder, my son," he said, a world of pathos in his tone. I inclined my head silently, the brine very near my eyes. Then I left the house, hurrying toward the bluff.

Everywhere was activity and the confusion of hurried preparation. Scattered detachments of nearby militia were already arriving. Alarm guns still boomed, their thunder rolling for miles up the valley of the Kahuahgo, the echoes reverberating among its hundred hills. The peals electrified the militia which had long awaited the signal, and when the expresses reached them they found many of the companies ready to start, the women, children and old men vieing to wish them godspeed. As it transpired they remained mostly idle, for there occurred no opportunity that day for the use of small arms. But they mingled with the cheering throng gathered on the bluff and joined in the exultation that followed the engagement.

Hurrying upon an errand, I presently came across Sergeant Cyrenus, who saluted and reported my company assembled. "You're shy on lootenants, Cap'n," he grinned, "so I've done what I could. I gathered 'em in."

I made suitable acknowledgement and inquired into the circumstances of the visit, as far as transpired.

"Came at sun-up," answered the little man. "After the Oneida, I guess. Get the whole navy if they corral her," he grinned. Indeed, there was little else as yet. "You know," he continued, "she was moored just inside the harbor. Well, Cap'n Woolsey clumb her masthead this morning with his glass to his eye and seen the five o' them comin' into the bay. He sends Lootenant Blair ashore to tell Colonel Bellinger, after which the news is whooped all over the place while Woolsey cuts loose the Oneida and noses around to try and make the open lake and slip 'em. She slips around the point and stands up the bay, but the five of 'em is on the lookout for her, so Woolsey brings her back. She's moored now just outside the point. Nine of her guns is snoutin' up the bay and the boats took the other nine over here. Got 'em perched up on that breastwork," pointing.

I hurried to the bluff, where a large number of militiamen and citizens were busy on the breastwork. I soon found enough to do and perspired with the rest of them. Womenfolk were there in plenty, staring out upon the bay, anxious but undismayed.

The British fleet had laid-to a couple of miles away. A quintet of union jacks flapped at the mastheads. We noticed that they had with them a small vessel, evidently one of our own, captured on the lake. As we gazed we noticed a boat leaving the flagship, the Royal George. An officer sat in the stern, rowed rapidly toward us by a crew of jackies. Another boat put after the first. Both stopped alongside our captured craft, taking in its crew. Then they kept on toward the bluff.

A herculean figure passed us from the direction

of headquarters and advanced to the edge of the bluff, standing waiting with folded arms for the approaching boats. It was John.

The boats drew near to us, finally halting close under the lee of the bluff, the tars resting on their oars. The officer stood up, facing my huge comrade. I noticed that his eyes lighted with appreciation of the giant's dimensions.

"Sir," said he affably, "I am Lieutenant Wetherspoon, of the Royal George at present, and representing Commodore Earle in command of His Majesty's fleet yonder. These men," indicating the prisoners, "form the crew of a captured vessel, loaded with flour, bound for Port Putnam. The craft had the fortune to fall in with us in her own waters this morning. We shall retain the flour but not the men, who would help only to eat it. So we return the men to you."

"I, sir, am Captain Godfrey, representing Colonel Bellinger, who is in charge here at present," returned John, as the released crew splashed to shore and were assisted up the face of the bluff with ropes in the hands of the militiamen. "I thank you for your courtesy in furnishing us with these happily arrived assistants, for truth to tell, we need all we can get. Their disposition, however, I will venture to hazard, was of secondary importance. May I inquire the main object of your call this beautiful Sabbath morning?"

"My commander," returned the other, grinning pleasantly at John, "delegates me to say that he has come for yonder craft," indicating the Oneida, "which you have been at such pains to fit out for His Majesty's service. He further commissions me to assure you that if a gun is fired to molest him, he

will do himself the pleasure of burning your village and exterminating yourselves."

"I fear it is the weakness of your commander to deal in dreams rather than actualities," replied John, dryly. "Our preparations are crude, but I think they will do. You may say to your chief, Lieutenant, that if he wants the Oneida, why, let him come and take her! Also, if he would burn the village he must first enter it!"

A cheer burst from the soldiery on the bluff. The lieutenant bowed and his jackies rowed him back to the flagship, followed by the other boat which had assisted in bringing over the captured crew of the bark yonder. Her custodians gazed with melting affection at the Old Sow, then shook their fists at her provender.

Who and what was the Old Sow? Topping a six-foot mound which had been made ready for it, there perched on its pivots a grim old gun which the day was to make famous, for out of her hoarse throat was to sound the first gutteral growl of the war which broke on this historic Sabbath. This gun, a thirty-two pounder, was originally intended for the Oneida, but being found too heavy it had been added to the land battery, after having lain in the mud near the shore for a long period succeeding the brig's rejection of it. Colonel Bellinger rescued it from its inglorious retirement and had it mounted on its mound, where it now rested, staring sulkily out upon the lake. While it was rolling in the mud some irreverent wag had christened the big piece the "Old Sow," and the name stuck. But it was written that before the sun fell her grunts were to make her glorious.

She looked formidable enough, being by far the

largest piece in our armament. There was but one drawback to her effectiveness, which was an absence of any proper ammunition for her. It had been written for repeatedly, but, like many other things, had not arrived. In lieu of anything heavier, a pile of twenty-four pound balls rested near her. Those in charge eyed the inadequate munitions with disfavor and cursed the gun and the government impartially when they learned that no better ammunition was available.

Now the Old Sow was in capable hands that day, being in charge of Sailingmaster William Vaughan, a man of parts and of passionate perseverance at times like these. He was ably assisted, and to Vaughan and his mates should be accorded a deathless fame, for they saw to the belching forth of the first note of defiance in that storied war. But just now, Vaughan, Parkinson and the rest stood dubiously eyeing the puny twenty-four-pound balls and the gaping, hungry muzzle of the Old Sow and cursed, for she required pills and they had only pellets. They cursed, I say, but mildly, for they were passably godly men. Moreover, relief was to come by unique means, means that Vaughan and his mates might not yet know.

Finally, after what seemed an interminable time, the five hostile ships got under way and moved up for the attack. The Royal George, carrying twenty-four guns and two hundred and sixty men, led the procession, followed in turn by the Seneca, Prince Regent, Earl of Moira and Simcoe, mounting together eighty guns more. Arrived at an easy distance away, they wheeled, bringing their broadsides to bear on us. The Royal George was to sail

past the bluff and rake us. If anything was left standing the Seneca was to follow, and so on.

Captain Woolsey, leaving the Oneida in charge of a lieutenant, had taken general command of the batteries on shore, being assisted by Captain Camp, John, myself and some others. The state of the Old Sow, too, in regard to her insufficient rations, had been noticed and she was provided for from a source entirely unexpected.

Shortly before the battle commenced, while Vaughan and his mates were disconsolately scratching their heads over the Old Sow and the proposed contents of her belly, they were approached by Widow Hankinson with a word for Vaughan's ear. They drew apart from the others, the widow addressing William earnestly.

A windy sigh exploded at my right hand. I turned to behold Noadiah, rapt eyes fixed upon the widow, his face glowing with fleshy admiration. Noadiah was evidently impressed. Attracted by his ardent gaze, the widow's eyes stole a side-long glance at the veteran. Then they were modestly averted as she continued her talk with Vaughan. Noadiah sighed again, most prodigiously, and turned to me.

"There's a woman!" he exclaimed with conviction. I nodded gravely. It was indubitable.

The widow's communication had been of moment, for Vaughan was nodding his head with a curious grin. The widow whisked her buxom self toward the village, with an arch look toward Noadiah that provoked another sigh, eclipsing the others.

A little later there was heard in the homes of the hamlet a curious sound of rending and tearing. The fruitage of the sacrifice was borne to the Old Sow

by the patriotic women. There was much enwrapping and shrouding and the twenty-four-pound balls, by the grace of God and torn carpets, were become thirty-twos. Gunner Parkinson rammed one of them home and cried out that a prayer went with it.

The Royal George had just come within range, her gunners preparing to sound the first grim note of the war. Parkinson anticipated them. The match was applied, there was a flash and a thunderous roar and the first defiant shot of the historic struggle belched out, swathed in glory, smoke and carpet rags.

It fell harmlessly in the water, far short of the flagship, whose crew yelled with derision and replied with a broadside which struck the face of the bluff, far down, between grass and water. Whereat the town's defenders in turn retaliated with sneering outcries.

The affair then began in earnest. For two hours there was incessant thunder. The militia could do nothing, as the distance was too great for small arms, so they stood behind the breastworks and watched the drama. Thousands were gathered by this time, drawn by the news that had flown on the wind's wings; spectators watching the broad arena of land and sea; praying for victory yet helpless to assist; cursing the enemy; trembling and torn with the frenzy of that summer day.

John and I, with some picked men from our companies, were helping the gunners, who were short of capable assistants. John had Sergeant Noadiah; I had Sergeant Cyrenus. Each veteran worked like a machine, cool as an automaton, but neither looked toward the other.

Not much damage had yet been done, though the British seemed to cherish an antipathy toward the luckless bluff and were literally pounding the face off it. Hardly any of their balls came over the brink. As for our battery, the only really formidable gun it boasted was the Old Sow, and Vaughan had demonstrated to his intense disgust that it was hard to obtain a proper range with the swaddled rations he was obliged to feed her. A few shots, however, had had some effect, but he prayed viciously for just one thirty-two pound ball. And at last he got it.

A big thirty-two from the Royal George, which carried some large guns, cleared the bluff, ploughing a deep furrow in the ground and lying there, harming nobody. In a twinkling Noadiah caught it up, scampering like an unwieldy boy toward William Vaughan.

"The redcoats can't play ball!" he yelled. "Ive caught 'em out! See if they can catch back again!"

There was envy in the face of Cyrenus as I glanced at him. And more, for I caught the eyes of Noadiah slyly at corners, peering at the crowd. Sure enough, there stood the widow, a plump hand violently brandishing a handkerchief, her cheer mingling with the rest. And Noadiah straightened pompously and thrust out the great folds of his cheeks.

Meanwhile all was animation about the Old Sow. Black Julius, of her crew, a herculean negro and then a novelty in that section, being moreover one of the most gallant fellows I ever met, showed a fortune in ivory and hugged his ebony body, dripping with sweat and naked to the waist.

"Ho, ho!" he shouted, pointing to the fleet. "Fo'

Gawd, massas, now de Old Sow grunt hawg fo' suah!"

It was even so. The crew rammed the captured ball home, aiming carefully at the flagship. That grunt struck the stern of the Royal George and raked her deck, a cloud of splinters flying clear to her mizzen topsail. We learned later that fourteen men were killed and eighteen wounded by the shot.

The bombardment from the circling ships was now redoubled. They smarted yonder, and small wonder, with a desire to retaliate. But few of their shots, however, because of defective aiming, were of any evident effect. As yet we had suffered no casualties. At the peak of the flagstaff, set that very morning through a happy thought upon the redoubt that sheltered the crew of the Old Sow, waved defiantly the stripes and stars for whose honor we fought that day—and for which our sons and their sons' sons will fight forever.

Suddenly a ball from a gun of the Royal George hurtled high over the edge of the cliff. There was a splintering of wood, and the flagstaff, trembling to its base, was denuded of half its length, the tip, with the flag adhering to it still, tumbling to the ground. A yell of derisive triumph came from the flagship.

Several of us who were near by sprang to recover the banner. Ere we could do so, there was a rush forward from among the cloud of spectators who stood behind the breastworks. A pair of eager hands caught up the trailing flag, a lithe young form sprang to the Old Sow's mound. And there, with flashing eyes and a dauntless, fiery zeal; with one hand resting on the ancient gun and the other defiantly waving the glorious bunting in the very

faces of its foes; an embodied goddess of that liberty for which we have fought and will fight until the end, the liberty whose spirit is woven in every thread and fibre of the flag we love; there stood Dorothy!

So she stood, nor had a thought of self or fear, while the din grew strangely still upon the wide water and the land. Nor did she seem to realize the sudden silence or its import until, from the decks of the Royal George and the others of the king's ships there pealed, as with one voice, a ringing cheer, a cheer that was echoed deafeningly by the throngs now gathered on the bluff. And thus recalled to earth, poor Dorothy,—a goddess no longer, but a shrinking maid, aghast at the sensation her inspired act of patriotism had created,—thrust the banner confusedly into the hands of Gunner Parkinson and blushing fled away.

It was enough. The flagship had already suffered seriously and so had two of her companions. Even as we looked the signal for retreat was shown and the demoralized fleet, headed by the Royal George with the discomfited Earle sailed for the open that led to Frontenac. Not a Yankee had been killed or wounded.

Delirium reigned. The regimental band played "Yankee Doodle" and the soldiery and citizenry cheered till their throats might bear no more. They gathered about our home and yelled for Dorothy, who dared not appear and begged me to send them away, while I laughed.

And so ended the first battle of the war of 1812, of which it has been said, with grim humor, that the British broke nothing in it but the Sabbath.

CHAPTER XIV

TWO GRAVES

Through a dense, whispering canopy of leaves the sun shot uncertain lances of wavering light. Wood creatures scattered at our approach, startled by the crackling of twigs and the soft padding of our footsteps in the spongy soil. A little away sounded the murmurous river, brawling softly over its shallows. The July sun flamed fiercely in a sky whose blue showed in tiny patches through the interstices of the wooded roof. Here was a hallowed coolness. The tempered shade was refreshing, for it was stifling in the open.

The drowsy peace of a forest afternoon, the droning calm that dreams where the shadows waver, stole in upon us as we strode. Our jaded spirits were revived. The Sabbatarian quiet refreshed our senses, dulled with din and wearied with the incessant strain of months. In this dim, weird world, rich in royal green, sentient and shadowed, the drama of but three days gone seemed a remote and unreal thing. The salient bluff, sullenly barricaded; the breathless crowds that bawled defiance from its brink; the circling ships; the diapason of the cannonade; we might have dreamed them all. The echoes of that fiendish saturnalia of sound, still muttering dimly in our brains, seemed in these woods a profanation.

"We are almost there, John," I called to the giant who preceded me. "Somehow I feel gloomy, a presentiment——"

"Don't be a woman, Gilbert," he boomed back at me. " 'Sufficient unto the day,' you know. We shall be the first to tell them of last Sunday's services."

"God grant it," I muttered, but could not shake off the depression that gathered with every step.

We had secured leave immediately after the battle to make this journey. Our anxiety was keen at the failure of M. De Montefort and his daughter to reach the Harbor, and we had set out to find how they were faring. We had stopped at the intervening settlements, but nothing had been seen of them and we were now nearly to the cabin.

John's hound, Gypso, accompanied us, running ahead and sniffing in the manner of his nosey tribe. Suddenly he bayed and bounded forward, disappearing in the thick foliage.

"The cabin is just ahead," said John, pausing in his rapid walk. "You see it is all right. The hound has run to meet them." We hurried on.

A few moments and we emerged into the clearing. The fierce sunlight made us blink after the dim, religious shade of the woods. We hurried to the cabin, expectant. The door idled, swinging wide open. I looked for Renee to emerge in welcome from the interior.

We entered. The hound was aimlessly nosing about the living room. No one greeted us. The place was still, still as the grave. Only the outer twittering of birds; the cawing of passing crows. We listened for a remembered voice, but none came. An odd sense of desolation rested in the room, desolation gray and dreary. I noticed with

a shock that the furniture was dull with dust; that a window had been broken, the glass strewing the unswept floor.

I stepped to the little kitchen, built off an end of the living room. The evidence of desertion was unmistakable. The ashes of a dead fire, cold and gray, the rusting utensils, told of long inattention.

I stared stupidly, hardly comprehending, when I heard a low exclamation from John. He was bending over the floor, examining something at which the hound was sniffing. There were dark, sanguinary blots there, dulled splotches of blood. Our faces blanched.

"We must look outside?" John said, and led the way. Like a somnambulist I followed him.

As we stepped out upon the porch my eyes fell upon a little book lying there. I glanced at the title and the rush of a tender memory brought again the spell of an autumn day, I lay again drowsily watching a radiant face, the low music of a woman's voice fell faint and far away and the impalpable veil of sleep settled down like mist upon me. I slipped the little book into my pocket. A terror of foreboding seized me and left me shaking.

John stood still and scowling upon the porch, gazing about the clearing before us. Suddenly he grasped my arm, pointing silently.

About a dozen feet away were the marks of a struggle. The ground was trampled, the bruised grasses trodden into the soil. In a moment we were on the spot. John's keen eyes immediately espied something which he indicated, a grim sternness gathering about his mouth. It was the impress of a deformed foot, damningly distinct in the brown

soil, as plain as when first made, no rain having fallen for days.

"That fiend!" I burst out, my voice shaking. "John, why did you not kill him?"

His face went gray but he did not answer.

"It cannot be too late!" I cried, clutching his arm. "They must have been here only recently, else the mark would be obliterated! Perhaps we may overtake them!"

"You forget, Gilbert," he answered. "It has been very dry. Still we can tell if the trail is fresh. Gypso!" he called. The hound came bounding to him from the rear of the cabin. Godfrey indicated the foot-print. The hound sniffed, moved ahead a few feet and paused, baffled.

"It is an old trail," said John, "but see, the dog moves to the north. That hellhound and his red curs are long since back in Canada. If he were here now," his voice grown snarling, "I would rip him in two, though God cursed me!"

"Though God cursed you!" I repeated, stupefied. "That beast! That monstrous vile toad!"

"You do not know," he muttered, turning away. I regarded him curiously, even in the midst of my torturing fears. What unknown thing lay between these two?

The hound had again disappeared behind the cabin. We followed him, thinking perhaps to find a clew to the mystery.

The dog was at the edge of the woods. He was whining softly and scratching at the ground, brown clods flying out behind him.

We drew nearer and saw something that chilled our blood. Before us lay two mounds, the surmounting forest earth still fresh upon them. We

drew near fearfully, Godfrey snatching the hound away.

They lay just within some low underbrush. A rude wooden slab, doing duty for both of them, was dimly visible through the leaves. Dashing aside the screening bushes we beheld the board, on which had been rudely marked with charcoal the words:

VINCENT DE MONTEFORT
and
RENEE, HIS DAUGHTER.
June 29, 1812.

I do not know how long I stood petrified, gazing straight before me with the stare that lies in the eyes of the dead ere the lids are closed down forever. There comes a moment into the lives of most of us into which seems rolled all the agony of the ages; a moment in which the numb misery of all time, since its beginning, is bursting the brain while the heart sheds tears of blood. It is a horrible, soul-affrighting thing, a blackness of stupefying darkness across which writhes a single bolt of light; the livid lightning-flash of realization of what a nightmare a bereft eternity must be.

I was dimly aware of John grasping my hand. I looked dully into his pitying eyes that searched my own. Then, divining that I was in hell, he left me, saying no word.

After a little I stretched my arms across the graves, my eyes hard and burning in my stony face. "O, God!" I breathed, despair and rebellion writhing within me, "she saved my life. And I—I came too late!"

I flung myself face down in the grass, trying to forget—and to remember. The breeze crooned in the leaves, the smell of ferns came fragrant from the shadows, there was the song of birds.

It grew intolerable. I struggled to my feet, and as if dazed, walked past the cabin to the tortuous little path that led to the river and hurried along it, reeling like a drunken man, tripping and falling headlong over roots and dead trunks, indifferent to my bruises. There was a stealthy step behind me, but I did not turn.

I had reached the rendezvous, the spot where Renee had kept tryst with her birds in the long summers. How I had pictured her a thousand times, threading her way daily to the river, as the days lengthened and the waters rose, freighted with their outgoing crust of strangling ice. There she was wont to stand expectant, her eyes to the southward. There she had waited for the spring to bring them, her birds, and finally they had come and she was lost to view in the center of a white billowing cloud. Did they grieve at her neglect now, I wondered dully. Had they come daily to the spot, to coo mournfully in vain, finally to wheel sorrowfully and soar away, hurt because forgotten? Forgotten? Perhaps, but only because the dear eyes that had watched for their coming, with the fond light in them, were forever closed; only because the little hands that had fed them were eternally at rest. My eyes stung; I gazed at the little river through blinding tears.

A little longer and I returned to the cabin. I heard a rustling some distance in front of me, but John was seated on the porch when I emerged into the clearing.

We sat sadly for a time, saying nothing. "Who found and cared for them, I wonder," I said at last.

"I think it was probably some wandering hunter, perhaps some one who had known and loved them," he answered, "and he saw to it that they were laid at rest. The date is probably that of burial."

For a time we sat in unbroken silence, the hound at our feet, watching us mournfully. Finally we rose, and without looking back, shouldered our packs and rifles and retraced our steps across the clearing and into the dim woods.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE LION'S JAWS

I pushed my plate away impatiently. "No, Dorothy!" I exclaimed, almost roughly, "I tell you I do not want it! Please take it away!"

My sister reached tentatively for the dainty dish she had prepared. Her eyes filled and her sweet young face was troubled. "I am sorry, Gilbert, but I thought——" she faltered.

I caught her hand. "Forgive me, Dorothy!" I burst out. "I am a brute, but I am very, very miserable."

Leaving my barely tasted supper, I hastily left the house, encountering John outside.

We walked to the main street and proceeded to the quarters of our companies. It had been four days since we returned from the cabin, four interminable days for me. My grief was a stone that weighed me down, I brooded constantly. John had tried tactfully to bring me out of myself, but the wound was still too raw. My father and sister had remarked my depression, but I knew that they ascribed it to the natural sadness I felt at arriving too late to be of aid to friends who had so well served me in time of trouble, though I think that Dorothy, with her woman's perception, probed deeper and understood in part the blow which had fallen upon me. Her manner to me was tender in those days,

evidencing a compassion which I appreciated at times.

As John and I approached the quarters we accosted a curious character, who stopped, extending a skinny yellow hand, whining for alms. Her rapacious talons clutched the resultant offering as if they would never let it go. Her toothless jaws gaped in a senile smile.

"God save you for Christians, gentlemen," she croaked. "I must have a crust and a pallet somewhere and few are the coppers I get to pay for 'em," and she blinked rheumy eyes at us.

"Hard lines, Mother Corp," said John, glancing quizzically at the red cape she wore. "But war is in the land, and truly, your cloak smacks of fealty to all the Georges, living and dead."

"War, yes, red war!" mumbled the crone. "Blood and war, both red! The redder the better, good sirs. Blood's made for the lettin'. It's to flow, mark me, good red blood, your blood and his." She bit the coins we had given her with her remaining snags, melancholy monuments of her departed youth. Satisfied, she thrust the money within her withered bosom. It was safe there.

"A pleasant prospect, truly," rejoined John, with a grim smile. "But, Mother Corp, who tells you of these things?"

"Who tells me?" she replied, with weird chucklings. "It's in the air, my gentlemen, in the air. The winds blow it, the waters moan it, the breezes whisper it at night. You shall bleed and many with you. The sun sinks red these days and woe will come from Frontenac."

"Woe came the other day; on a Sabbath day you will remember, good mother," answered John. "It

came and it went away again, with its tail between its legs and in a most ungodly hurry."

"True, my merry gentlemen," chuckled the decrepit dame, her sinister grin gleaming dim in the gathering dusk, "but wait another day. Thy friends, they will come again from Frontenac."

"And be sure, old mother," he replied, "that when they do they will return again to Frontenac."

"May be, may be," mouthed the hag, "but some of you will go with them, and many of you they will leave behind them. For the dead are useless and it is a waste of time to carry carrion." She moved away up the street, mumbling and muttering, the lake breeze billowing her crimson cloak in fantastic fashion.

John burst into a loud laugh. "Well, upon my soul!" he ejaculated. "The old woman's wits have not all gone wool-gathering, I'll be bound. From what strange, God-forsaken cranny did she come, Gilbert?"

"No one knows," I answered, as we walked slowly on to the quarters. "She has been in these parts for years, subsisting on alms. When she has temporarily exhausted Christian charity on this sparse side of the water, the other has the doubtful blessing of her. She always returns, however, and wanders from one hamlet to another and even among the cabins in the forest, seeking food and shelter. I take it her pickings have not been plenty of late. That is why she has consigned all of us to red ruin, as you heard."

"So no one knows whence she came," he observed. "I take it she is not a native."

"Not she," I answered dryly. "The country is hardly old enough for that, unless she be an

aborigine, and if the redskins were accused of kin to her there would be a rising and a general massacre of us whites. They hate her, thinking she has a devil, therefore fearing to harm her. As you have noticed, she is somewhat demented and they have a superstitious awe of such. The Indians on both sides of the river give her wide berth."

Approaching the quarters, we saw Sergeant Cyrenus sitting astride a dismantled gun, his pipe in his lean jaws, watching with malicious eyes someone across the road. This proved to be Sergeant Noadiah, sitting solemnly on the ground, his fat back resting against a pyramid of casks, munching tobacco with grave satisfaction. Sergeant Noadiah paused in his munching at the sound of our footsteps and turned his head. He saw Cyrenus. Rising, he lumbered away with fat dignity. Cyrenus removed his pipe from his mouth and spat with unction.

Lighting candles in the rough shanty which served us for company headquarters, John and I set to work on some plans of projected work on the defences. We had not been long engaged when there entered an infantryman, saluting.

"Captain Warburton," said he, "General Brown desires you to report to him at once at Colonel Bellinger's quarters."

I followed him from the room. Darkness had shut down, blotting out the village, save for its twinkling lights, like fireflies in a meadow. A pale moon gleamed now and then through occasional rifts in the heavy cloud masses overhead, driven by a rising wind. There was a presage of rain; the air was sodden with moisture.

General Brown's home was a few miles distant,

toward Watertown, but he spent most of his time during these days at the Harbor, being in command of the militia of the region. In a few moments I had reached the quarters and was admitted by the sentry on guard.

I stood in a plainly furnished room. Some military maps and drawings hung upon the walls. A battered old portrait of Washington, much the worse for wear, gloomed down upon us.

General Brown rose, his hands behind him, his powerful frame looming large in the dim light of the guttering candles. Long legs he had and square, powerful shoulders. No feathers and fuss about this famous fighter; his was the simplicity of action, swift and terrible. Such was the man who was moving heaven, earth and Washington to secure men, money and munitions; the man whom, as I believe before God, would have thrilled the world and his generation, with others to be born, had not the wan, compelling ghost of military precedent tied his hands. Had the reins of power been held by Brown's fingers, I believe that in place of those Canadian campaigns which must forever, through the crass blunders and cowardice of monumental military weaklings, be my country's shame, there would have been one grand movement, complete in project, overwhelming in achievement, and the brightest page of the infant nation's endeavors in that war for right and liberty would have been written. The genius to command was stamped in every line of his face. The power of conquest rang in his voice, flashed from his indomitable eye. He raised his strong arm and his sword flashed in air; men cheered like mad and followed him in desperation to their death; followed him, I say, because he was

always at the head of his troops and did not fall himself only because the hand of God was with him. With such a leader, armed with the complete resources that were so badly needed but so insufficiently bestowed, what could have prevented Canada's undoing?

I was at first minded to grasp his hand, for I knew him well. But I was instinctively reminded of the recent close of our civic relations. I saluted, he returning it.

"Captain Warburton," he said, with that directness which was characteristic of him. "I require a man to sail for Frontenac immediately, and have chosen you, in accordance with our recent conversation. The mission, as you know, is a hazardous one. Detection means a noose, tight drawn. Are you willing to go?"

"More than willing, General," I answered quietly. "As I told you and at any time."

He regarded me keenly. "To-night?" he queried.

"It is dark and therefore more convenient," I replied.

"Good!" he said, and the quiet word thrilled me with a certain sense of worthiness. "It may be somewhat wet, but the sailors assure me they do not look for a dangerously heavy blow. One of the best sailors on the lake will take you there to-night. He will leave you some distance west of the town. You must then fend for yourself. Make rough maps of defences, get the strength of the garrison and all military resources you can gather, the extent of the shipbuilding, and in a word all the data possible. Do not expose yourself more than is necessary, but do not be over-cautious, for it would arouse suspicion far sooner than the other extreme. Three

nights hence be at the spot where my man will leave you, which will be a small cove a few miles west of Frontenac. Prepare to leave in one hour. The sailboat is anchored near the Oneida, in readiness for you. You have the uniform?"

"Lieutenant Stranahan had one of his own color among his effects," I answered. "We are of a size."

"Good!" he commented. "When in Rome, you know." He smiled.

My brow clouded as my memory reverted to the capture. A black fate, indeed! "Poor devil!" I muttered.

"He was a spy!" replied the general, frowning. "And a spy——" He paused.

I saluted and turned to go. "I, too, am a spy, General," I answered low. He nodded silently, his face troubled. I made to leave the room.

"Captain Warburton," called the General, and I paused again. "I despatch you on this hazardous duty because I have absolute confidence in your discretion and ability. And take care of yourself," he added and offered his hand. I grasped it and left.

I hurried to the house and changed my uniform for Stranahan's. My own I bundled up to don before I should recross the lake to resume my supposed surveillance on the southern frontier. These tactics would assist in disarming suspicion. I took leave of my father and sister, stating my mission, as I thought it best to do. My father clasped my hand and Dorothy smiled bravely, though with wet eyes. I embraced her tenderly, mentally cursing my roughness of an hour gone.

I stopped for a moment to acquaint John with my matter. The bones of my hand cracked as he wrung it.

"I would caution you, but you will not need it, for you will succeed," he told me. A little later and I was on my way to the waiting boat. The sailor in charge, a middle-aged man of medium height and a shrewd, brown face, had everything in readiness. We presently worked out of the harbor and sailed down the bay toward the open lake.

The wind blew steadily; there was an occasional drop of rain. We passed the outlying islands, black patches in the gloom, which was relieved occasionally when the wan beams of the moon pierced the shifting cloud-reaches overhead. For a couple of hours we drove along at a good speed, tacking but little. The man in the stern, taciturn and unsociable, said never a word, devoting himself to the management of the boat. He could have guided it through darkness that would have tried the eyes of a house cat, for he knew the lake better than most men know books.

For a time it looked as if General Brown's optimistic information regarding the weather would hold good and we would get to Frontenac without trouble. At one time when I judged we were about half way, the sky was blown nearly clear of clouds and it grew quite light.

But now the wind shifted, then veered again. Like a howling banshee it tore straight across the lake, driving a great bank of clouds down upon us, riven with livid lightning, spreading blackness over us, darkness in which one could scarcely see a hand. Thunder muttered, nearing till it bellowed in our ears. There was a dash of rain, then the heavens were opened. The wind howled in our rear, driving us straight north. We were in the midst of one of

those terrific gales for which Ontario is famed; famed and feared.

My companion laughed dryly in the darkness "Headed for Frontenac, anyway," he chuckled. "No gettin' around that."

The wind lashed the waters and great seas, foam-crested, drenched us with their spray. The boat heeled over, taking in a great wash of water. A thundering wave crashed against her side. She trembled like a wild thing.

"We're makin' time, anyhow," came from the stern. "Was about in the middle when this struck us. Liable to be at both ends, you at one and me at t'other, when it's done with. Makin' this last twenty-five mile in great time, I tell ye, boy. Feel her buryin' of her nose!"

At last we beheld a faint glow some distance to the east, the lights of Frontenac. At any rate we would land as instructed, if we landed at all, above the town.

Some distance more we tore through the water when suddenly there came a grinding shock. The boat had crashed, head-on, into some obstacle. She tipped violently. I had foolishly been standing up, gazing toward the glow, and was thrown headlong into the water.

I sank deep into that roaring waste, rising to the surface choking and with ringing ears. I yelled aloud for my steersman. Nothing came in reply but the infernal howl of the wind, the wash of the mighty waves. He, together with my boat and my own uniform, had evidently gone by the board, But there was another sound, faint and far away. I listened. It was the beating of the surf upon a

shore still distant, and the wind was driving me with the swells directly toward it.

I struck out. I was an expert in the water in those days, but aquatic exercise with soaked clothing proved exhausting. I relaxed, breathing hard, merely keeping myself afloat while the waves carried me shoreward.

The billows buffeted and strangled me. My limbs were leaden and the breath seemed gone from me. The waters rolled over my head. Half drowned, I sought to swim again, but it was of no use. I was exhausted. With a despairing groan I ceased my exertions and sank.

I rested on my knees, my mouth gaping with astonishment because above water. Before I could fully grasp the fact, along came a booming wave, catching me sternward and heaving me, gasping and choking, upon my face in sand and water. An instant more and I had staggered to my feet, plunging through the shoal water and sprawling, completely done, on the Canadian shore; in the enemy's country and thanking God.

CHAPTER XVI

RED ROLFE

I lay for a time inert. I was still so close to the raging lake that its spray drenched me where I sprawled. It was so dark that I could distinguish but dimly the deeper murk of the wooded shore before me, and then only at infrequent intervals as the rolling clouds occasionally broke and the pale moonbeams feebly struggled through the rifts. The leonine roar of the surf, thunderous and insistent, was in my ears. I panted like a spent hound. After a while I staggered weakly to my feet and clambered up the precipitous side of a steep bank. Small stones rattled under my feet; the dark masses of the adjacent woodlands, swathed in funereal gloom, loomed close at hand. I swished through long grasses, drenched with spray. I caught myself picking my way cautiously to escape the wet, and laughed grimly when I remembered my soaked condition.

Now I had reached the crest of the bank and plunged into a dense growth of bushes. I was deep in impenetrable darkness. I went aimlessly on, the growl of the surf sounding fainter in my ears.

I do not know how long I struggled on under these depressing conditions, but I never exercised my legs under more unpleasant circumstances. My

soaked garments sagged about my body. I was chilled, for though it was July, the rain and water were cold with the whipping gale. I pushed on only because it was more comfortable to do so than to remain inactive. Though I could see nothing about me, I noted the proximity of objects in unpleasant ways. Unseen branches scraped my face and left it bleeding; I tripped over logs and tree roots and fell upon my battered visage with sundry imprecations. I hoped the dawn was not far distant.

An owl hooted near me with chilling lugubriousness. Vague stirrings sounded from the rain-swept darkness. The wind had risen. The crashing of adjacent branches startled me. I leaped aside as one came tearing down, close to my head. I was willing to be hanged, if need be, for the good of the cause, but desired a chance to test my wits against those of the enemy first.

Plainly, however, this was an aimless wandering. The roar of the surf had grown again; I was evidently traveling in a circle. I finally sank down discouraged upon the soaked ground, which was no wetter than I, and cursed the continuance of night. I had frequently fared nocturnally in the forest, but under more pleasing conditions.

On the whole, my luck was ill. I peered disconsolately ahead into the darkness. Suddenly I noted a faint glimmer of light. I watched it intently for a moment, thinking it one of those fancied flashes which come from the straining of eyes that seek to pierce intense gloom. But it remained and revived me. Gaining my feet I made toward it.

In a few moments, while hastening along that dark, uneven way, I stepped off into space and found myself to the neck in cold running water.

Additional wettings, more or less, could not disconcert me now, and I struck out unconcernedly. It was a small stream and a few strokes served to carry me to the opposite bank. The light was now close at hand and I was speedily there.

In the midst of the black forest stood a tiny cabin of logs, or shack would be a better word. From a rude aperture which served for a window streamed the light I had seen.

I made my way hastily to the door, at which I knocked. There was no answer. I paused a moment and knocked again.

"Who's there?" came in a quavering tone from inside.

"No one that will harm you," I rejoined. "Let me in and I'll tell you about it."

"Mon Dieu! have you come for me?" asked the voice, unmistakably frightened.

"I don't know you and you don't know me!" I answered angrily, for my patience was nigh done. "I want shelter and a little drying, that is all."

Now the door opened a very little. I inserted my foot, whereupon the occupant sought to slam the portal shut again. Exasperated, I flung my weight against the boards that barred me. The door flew open with such celerity that I fell through it. A small figure reeled backward against the opposite wall.

"You wear the red, m'sieur!" gasped a voice, "and yet you say you have not come for me!"

"Nor have I," I grinned at him, regaining my equilibrium and my temper simultaneously. "What could I do with you if I took you? Why should anyone want you?"

Indeed there was reason for the query. The little

man was far from prepossessing, either in face or physique. His small, bent figure, with rounded shoulders, was illy clothed. His dark, wrinkled face, unmistakably French, wore a hunted, furtive expression. The features had an oddly unfinished appearance, as if hewn out with a dulled chisel. The black eyes were large and staring. Cupidity leered from them; the whites were splotched with red. A fringe of ragged gray whisker straggled from either ear, reluctantly meeting under a lean jaw. A mass of long, iron-gray hair snarled uncombed nearly to his shoulders. His skin was leathery and his hands, with abnormally long fingers and untrimmed nails, were never quiet. They picked incessantly; now at the thin beard, presently at his buttons, again at the sorry whiskers.

I began to strip off my soaked uniform. "Pray overlook my remaining without leave," said I smiling amiably at my gaping host. "But, as it is, can we have a fire? And may I have some clothes while these are drying?"

The little man arose without a word. Ascending a rough ladder which led to a loft above, he rummaged therein. He reappeared with a nondescript bundle which he thought might do. I ascended the ladder and effected the change, tossing down my own water-logged outfit. The little man's trousers were far from ample, and, as I sat down, I feared for their entirety. Over my shoulders I had thrown a coat of my host's and thrust my feet into a pair of well-worn boots he had secured for me. I began to feel more comfortable. The odd little stranger bustled about, preparing a blaze in his rude fireplace to dry my uniform. Presently the clothes were

toasting and I had the grace of an afterthought to thank him.

"Why were you frightened at my approach?" I asked the little man, who was nervously regarding me.

"I thought, m'sieur, that you had come from Frontenac to bring me to fight, as they have many," he replied. "Non, merci, m'sieur, I would rather not! It is safer not."

"True," I answered dryly. "Who are you?"

"One Jacques Pitou," he replied simply. "And you, m'sieur?"

"Lieutenant Percy Stranahan, of Montreal," I rejoined glibly, remembering just in time to lie. "I have been in some little business on the other side and was trying to reach Frontenac when we lost our reckoning and almost our lives in this cursed storm. I managed somehow to reach the shore. I don't know where my boatman is. Perhaps in paradise."

He grinned and grunted. "How long shall you stay, m'sieur?" he inquired with ill-concealed anxiety.

"Only a few hours," I replied, "until my clothing is dried and I have eaten and rested. I shall pay you for your trouble, Pitou."

He burst into assurances of pleasure at my presence. My promise to pay had made all the difference in the world, as I had surmised it would. The gleam in the mottled eyes, the clawing hands, had revealed the woodsman's weakness.

I checked his impassioned utterances with some disgust. "How far am I from Frontenac, Pitou?" I asked.

"Only a little over five miles, Lieutenant," he purred in his broken English, grown suddenly

servile. "There's good path not far from here. Take you to the town direct. But why haste? You are fatigued; stay and rest t'ree, four day."

I laughed aloud. An odd jingle hummed in my head, a queer Canadian scrap picked up somewhere during a trip in the woods:

For value received,
I promise to pay
T'ree or four dollar
In t'ree or four day;—
If man no come—
Money no bring—
Pass right 'long
All th' same thing!

I chuckled at the whimsy. Pitou was eyeing me with resentment and a little suspicion. "Why do you laugh, m'sieur?" he asked.

"A trifle, mon ami," I told him. "Only a passing thought. It concerned money."

"Money!" he echoed, horrified. "Mon Dieu, m'sieur, I should not laugh at money! Sacre, non! The money, it is a serious matter with me, m'sieur!"

"So I gather," I replied. "But as for my remaining, Pitou, it can be for no longer than a few hours." His ugly face grew pensive. "But you shall be well paid," I added, and taking heart of hope, he grinned again.

My eyes were now heavy and small wonder. I expressed the wish to retire. The queer little fellow jumped up with abject courtesy and swarmed up the ladder, catching up a tallow dip as he ran. I heard him thrashing about overhead. Shortly afterward I was stretched upon the shakedown he had prepared for me. Tired as a dog, I fell speedily asleep, the rain pattering softly upon the bark roof over me.

It ran through somewhat in spots, but I did not mind.

It was broad daylight when I awoke. The sky was swept clear of clouds and the warm sun was drying the moisture which still glistened upon the leaves overhead and dampened the rich dark mould beneath. The air, newly washed, was freshly intoxicating. Pitou had my uniform, fully dried, ready for me. I donned it and hastened out of doors for a few deep breaths, while Pitou prepared my breakfast of porridge, cakes and venison. Rude fare, to be sure, but I tried the three courses in turn, reversed and was helf through on a third circuit before I desisted. For I ate in those days.

Breakfast done I lighted my pipe, and securing some tobacco from Pitou, my own being ruined by the water, I went outdoors. Pitou accompanied me, tenderly solicitous, deluging me with inquiries as to my well being. Wearied, I sought a respite, asking information in my turn.

"How do you subsist, Pitou?" I inquired. "How came you here? The towns are less lonely."

"Sacre! I do not care for them," he responded. "Also, they are insistent there. As it is, I fear they will come for me to fight. Me, diable, me! Each day I fear it. I prefer to be here and trap, for it is thus I live. As for my country, I came from France, but it is long ago."

"Is it always so monotonous here?" I asked him. "Have you never excitement?"

"Not here, thank God!" he replied devoutly. "Once though, far north in the deep forest, there was much to excite me, ver' much!"

"Tell me about it," I suggested, idly interested.

"It is but two years that I have been in this spot,

m'sieur," he told me. "For several years I was far north, away from them all; one, two hundred miles. It was on the shore of a lake where the woods are thick. There was ver' much game; it paid to stay. But one night; ah, it was near to my last!

"It was a dark, wild night; much lak that just passed, but ver' much worse. I been goin' to bunk when there is a crash and bang! m'sieur, down comes the door of my shanty. And who stand there and watch me, who but that Red Rolfe and his Indians, six of them. You know of Rolfe, m'sieur?"

"Vaguely," I answered. "He is a white man who is reputed to control a gang of outlaws gathered from among the Indians of this region, is he not? I have heard incredible tales of their devil's doings."

"Ah, you know not Red Rolfe," said Pitou, almost in a whisper, "but I do. Sacre! He is a devil from hell, m'sieur! I see him standing there with wolf's grin on the damned red face of him. His teeth show like they was dog's, and his dirty redskins stand behind him. My heart jumps, m'sieur, then froze lak ice. Me, I have heard of this devil.

" 'Come, old man,' he say. 'Give up your money. I know you, and you die by bleedin' inches if you don't!'

"Well, m'sieur, I had it, but I been tore in little pieces, lak paper, before they get one penny. Red Rolfe, he swear lak soul in hell, and after a little he tell them tak' and torture me. They begin to do lak he say, but I don't remember well after a little, for it grow dark. They strip me with knives, m'sieur!" He rolled up his sleeve and showed me a great irregular scar, deep and angry looking. "There are many such," he added.

"I can but recollect," he continued, "that they crowd around me and cut and pinch and hold torches that blaze to my roastin' feet, while I howl, howl like damn dog. And when I am not howl I bite my lips through and through, so I shall not tell where the money is. Mon Dieu! how I hated them, m'sieur. And finally, lak I dream, I hear Red Rolfe swear and snarl lak dog he is.

"'By God!' he yell, 'if he no talk now he never will again! Pull out his tongue!' He grab my jaw and push it down and ram his other hand full in my mouth, m'sieur, feelin' for my tongue. 'Get a knife!' he yell.

"I am mad then, m'sieur, mad to foam with fear and hate of him. I champ his damn fingers till my teeth grate on the bones, lak saw through wood. He howl like wolf, and his redskins, they wrench my jaws apart to save his fingers that drip with the bleed, else, before God, m'sieur, I should have eaten them. And so he rage there lak big wood cat, froth at mouth and shaking his fingers that drip blood like rain, m'sieur.

"They come at me again, m'sieur, with knife to do it, and I am wag my tongue for last time in whisper of a prayer, when there is a rush from outside and in there bounds a big, black hound lak mad bear, on top the whole crew. And so hard does he come, m'sieur, that they all go sprawl over each other on the floor. One of them, he draw and try to knife the dog, but the dog he spring, swish! lak that, and over he go with dog's teeth meet in his throat. Then there is a rush of feet outside, and in jumps the biggest man le bon Dieu has ever let me see, m'sieur. He lands most on the top of me, and as my arms they are tied together, I roll

out of the way and lay up against the wall, watching. And the sight! Dieu! it keeps me young to think of it, m'sieur!

"He grabs couple of them by dirty necks, so—" illustrating with an eloquent gesture, "and—crack! —their heads go bang together. They drop lak logs. He grabs wrist of another who is comin' with knife. He twist the arm, I hear it snap. The two who are left, they get away, just as he stretch out his long arms for them, and I b'lieve them to be running yet, m'sieur. The one with the arm that is broke, him he kick out door, and with them the two whose heads are cracked.

"All this time Red Rolfe, he stand and gape like fish on shore, m'sieur, back up against wall. His red whiskers and his red hair, they bristle lak hide on dog."

I stifled an exclamation. A growing suspicion had been suddenly verified.

"The giant, who has so well arrive, for my comfort, m'sieur, he turn to Rolfe and the black eyes of him is lighted with the red flame. But he say not one word, though I know that each he know the other. The big man, he point to door.

"The red one, he start for it, and the big man, he turn away with never one word yet. Red Rolfe, he go sneak to door with look that is wicked as hell in the cat's eyes of him. But just before he reach it, because big man has turned his back, he grab his knife and lunge at big man. I shout, m'sieur, but it is too late if the hound had not been there. But he has left the redskin, whose blood from his torn throat has daub the floor, and the dog is meet Rolfe half way and the back of the red

one's head, it hit the floor mos' ungodly hard, m'sieur, while knife fly out his hand.

"The big man, he pull the growlin' dog off Red Rolfe, and the big man's jaws, they grow set as the hinges of hell, m'sieur. Then he speak the first words I have hear him use. 'So,' he say, 'you have got down to stab in back.' That it is all, then he do a thing that keeps me young, m'sieur, only to think of it.

"Now Red Rolfe, he is a broad, short man, and bull-like in the strength, but he is like a child, m'sieur in those terrible hands. I see the giant stand him up and knock him down till his face, it is bruised jelly, and his eyes they are shut tight lak kitten's that is newly born. The blood, it stream down, and the red whiskers, they are redder yet. Then when he is quite still and move no more at all to get away, the big man, he pick him up and throw him out door lak the others. And then, m'sieur, he untie me and dress my hurts, and then bimeby he make to prepare for himself his supper.

"The nex' day, we leave together, for I know it is not safe for me there, and he carry me good part of the way and is never tired. Dieu! he is a giant, m'sieur. He take me here, to this spot, where I make to build me this cabin while he go on to Mon'real. His name, I never know it, but my life, it he can always command, m'sieur. Ah, the struggle! Nom de Dieu! If you could imagine it!"

I could imagine it. My thoughts flew back to the scream of an involuntary suicide, so well remembered; to the sight of a dark body shooting out from a wooded bank into swift waters, as if hurled by a catapult. I recalled a grim, straining struggle for the possession of a rifle, a crashing blow full in a

fiend's face, a bleeding mouth despoiled of fangs. Did I know the identity of the rescuer of Jacques Pitou? As surely, indeed, as I knew Red Rolfe.

I took leave of my host shortly after dinner. "I must get on to Frontenac," I said as I left him, "and I hope we may meet again." As I had paid him liberally, I made no doubt that a corresponding sentiment, which he expressed, was unaffectedly sincere.

I set off toward Frontenac, gloating over the vision conjured by the Frenchman's graphic words, picturing the dismay of Red Rolfe and his villainous crew that followed the entry of the terrible pair among them. I imagined the red one's hateful face, bloody and pulpy from righteous, honest blows, the eyes closed tight as a baby kitten's. There were fat chucklings in my throat that scandalized scolding squirrels which peered at me, with inquisitive eyes, from adjacent trees.

CHAPTER XVII

AT THE KING'S INN

I walked leisurely on through the forest. The course, but dimly distinguishable in places, wound on through the thick of the woods. The afternoon was yet young and there was no need for haste. Discretion counseled that it would be better to make my entry into the town in the evening, so I proceeded slowly.

I felt reasonably confident and well equipped for the enterprise. Moreover, I entered into it with a certain recklessness of indifference that would certainly neutralize the excess of caution against which General Brown had warned me. I brooded constantly over the bitter fate that had befallen Renee and her father, and, had it not been for duty, I had cared but little in my present mood what might befall me, short of a rope. That I would not brook. If the worst came, why then I could anticipate it.

The sun was quite low when I had leisurely gone the five miles or thereabouts that intervened between the cabin and the outskirts of the town. Stopping at intervals to lounge under some friendly tree, I had prolonged the walk, but now I had arrived at the forest's edge and was close to the grim Mecca of my journey. Prowling among the trees, I gazed at the adjacent bundle of quaint, limestone buildings, sprawling squat and burly, dull gray in the

fading sunlight. A gilded cross, surmounting the spire of a large, stone church, flamed in the crimson glow. The town's main streets, white, dusty ribbons, ran straight back from the long, close-built water front, the principal thoroughfares cris-crossed by smaller ones in checkered design. Here and there, like sentinels, grimly in advance, stood blockhouses, facing the water. The outflung islands that hedged the harbor lay, green with verdure, great emeralds in the lake which, a stone's throw further on, merged its waters with the wide current of the mighty St. Lawrence, for here began the Canadian channel. Below the town, facing the flood that was disquieted with the breath of a whispering summer wind, stood Frontenac's guarding fortress. Low and gray and rambling, massively imperturbable, it sprawled on a low, green hill, grimly watchful, leashed thunders prisoned in the gullets of its guns.

The harbor itself, full of shipping, pulsed and throbbed. Late as it was growing, my ears caught the distant sound of hammers and the vague stir of strenuous preparation in the dockyards. Additions to the formidable fleet, with which Yeo dreamed of sweeping the lake, were building there. Clearly our Canadian cousins were alive to the harried situation and I made no doubt, even from my distant vantage ground, that they were much better equipped than ourselves.

But now the sun had dipped beneath the western rim and the dusk fell softly. The music of the hammers ceased and quiet fell. The shadows deepened where I prowled, becoming merged in murk. A little longer and the stars came glimmering; the crescent moon curtsied to a cloudless sky. The wind ruffled the leaves above me, a soft wind,

free from all boisterousness. The bull-like brawl of the night previous seemed strangely remote.

The time was at hand. I repeated my new name, for practice, and strode on toward the town. Presently I passed some straggling houses. The clatter of belated supping came to me. I was reminded of my own need.

I soon reached the docks, and turning, walked up a main street of the town. Soldiers were here and there; splotches of crimson covered the thoroughfare like the floor of a forest in September. They sauntered, they stood in small knots. They rolled pensive eyes at bug-eyed maids, loitering hard by, and were grandly oblivious to round-orbed children. I brushed elbows with these apparent comrades as I hurried on for supper. No nervousness dwelt within me. I was a gambler, confident and cool. The stakes were heavy, but my state of mind admitted no timorous fear. Besides, I held a hand far better than my opponents knew. So, with a reasonable degree of faith in the outcome, I reached the King's Inn.

The inn, low and rambling, stood to the right of the long, straight street. Of rude but massive architecture, its limestone walls, seamed and weather-beaten, supported an ancient roof. For Frontenac was a venerable town and this, its chief inn, had grown hoary with it. As I approached it a babel came from within; hoarse voices, clamorous laughter. A number of the king's men in uniform stood with some civilians in front of the door. They moved to allow me to enter.

I paused a breath upon the threshold, for this was the crucial moment, then went in.

I stood in a large, low room, lighted with great,

guttering candles. The smell of tallow smote the air, mingling with the stronger, spirituous odors. Great gouts of sound bellowed about me, the room was full to overflowing with redcoats. Full to overflowing were some of these latter also, as I gathered at a glance. Their thick tongues were loosened, gushing boisterously, while their quieter companions grinned with the appreciation which men feel for the condition of those more drunken than themselves.

Through the babbling vortex I twisted unnoticed, seeking the landlord. I met him half way, for he had noted my coming and scented custom. He was a weasel-faced little man with furtive eyes that gleamed with the love of money rather than for the things which money brings. He stood rubbing thin hands, a servile grin cracking his unhallowed face.

"Supper," I ordered briefly. "I am just arrived from a long journey and am tired. Take me out of this bawling mob."

The innkeeper led me out of the maelstrom into the eating room, the brawl coming more faintly to me through the thick, closed doors. I was served substantially and rose renewed. Filling and lighting my pipe, I repaired to the room wherein my whilom comrades were disporting.

The fun had grown more furious, serving men were rushing hither and yon, laden with flagons and glasses, no sooner replenished than emptied. Uniformed figures sprawled in the heavy chairs about the small tables. Glasses clinked and bumping mugs pledged healths interminable. A stalwart figure rose unsteadily, a filled mug circling tremulously over the speaker's head. A bibulous voice proposed a toast that was lost in the general confusion, whereat

the owner of the voice, grumbling in his mug, sat down again.

Scraps of disjointed conversation caught my ear. I was edified to learn that, for the most part, it concerned the Yankees. However, as the redcoats were the subject of like discussion at the Harbor opposite, probably under similar circumstances at this very time, it was not seriously wounding. What did cause me concern was the number of officers in that room. Captains and lieutenants galore, subalterns a plenty and more coming in. The generals, majors and colonels, how many of them were there I wondered whimsically, and where was their trysting place? They had evidently not been wasting time in Frontenac. Their harbor was clamorous with the sound of preparation; a formidable fleet already rode at anchor within it; more brigs were building. Even in the short time, I had noticed the scope of the defences and the possibilities for offense. Contrasting this state of affairs with our own pitiful paucity of resource, my heart might well sink within me. True, the first attempt had failed, but what might the second bring to us? That it would be made was wholly certain. A little more time for preparation, a more thorough organization of forces, and as Mother Corp had said, woe would surely come from Frontenac. The Harbor was a portal to the patriot frontier. Let the key be possessed by the enemy, and the entire region would be at his mercy.

All this I thought in a breath of time. The noise about me increased in volume. Thus far the situation had been merely convivial. There had been nothing of ill nature. United in a common denunciation of the Yankees, no taint of a family strife

had yet disturbed the exuberant serenity of the gathering. I sat there regarding my fellows with some amusement, till now happily unnoticed.

But now a burly figure arose unsteadily from a seat at the end of the room, coming toward me. It was that of a middle aged man, somewhat above medium height, compactly and powerfully built. He lurched a trifle as he approached. Stopping, he brought a thick hand down resoundingly on my shoulder. A red, blotched face, lighted luridly with bloodshot eyes, was thrust nearly into my own. The reek of drams innumerable was in my shrinking nostrils.

"A stranger, eh?" roared a hoarse voice, thick with drink. "So that you wear the scarlet coat, you're welcome. But who are you?"

The attention of the entire crew was drawn by the rough salutation, so it was amid silence that I answered him.

"I am Lieutenant Percy Stranahan," said I, "and I am just arrived from Montreal on certain business which I hope will result fortunately for our cause. You will all probably know of it later."

"To-morrow will care for itself," bellowed the man before me, thrusting his beefy face further into my own. "It's to-night we're living in! And now you're here, lieutenant, you must drink with us. Drink to the army and ourselves,—and to King George, damn him!" The latter was an afterthought.

While no habitual abstainer, this assuredly would not do. There would be the first dram and after that the deluge. I must preserve a clear head, let what unpleasant circumstances that might ensue attend the abstinence.

"Your pardon, sir," I replied courteously, "but I will not drink to-night. I am indisposed."

Deep in his cups, my companion's choler rose like a trout at a helpless fly.

"Will not drink!" he roared, in a ludicrous rage, "but, by God, you shall!" He beckoned to a passing serving man.

"Bring this fellow a glass of brandy," he ordered. "He is thirsty, make it a big one." He regarded me with drunken triumph as the attendant hurried away.

My blood boiled. There were murmurs about the room; a scarlet cordon was closing about the pair of us.

"Sir," I said through my teeth, "you had best have a care! I am not to be bullied! If you seek to force this potation on me, be sure that I shall wash your face with it!"

He empurpled. "Wash my face, will you!" he bellowed. "Why, you damned young dog, do you know who I am?"

"I have not the dishonor," I replied, with mock courtesy. There arose a general laugh.

"How dare you," he continued without heeding, "a petty, penniless, Irish pup, to talk with such cursed impudence to a descendant of one of the oldest houses in England?" The general laugh sounded again and louder. His compatriots seemed strangely wanting in respect for his pretensions.

I smiled contemptuously. "That you are a descendant I can well believe," I told him. "Whatever your antecedents, and I find it difficult to believe them as you say, yours is a descent in all senses of the word."

His naturally heavy wits being further deadened

with his drams, the subtle irony of this thrust was not at once patent to him. But the roars about him fired him to sudden understanding and to blazing wrath. The menial had arrived with the liquid he had ordered. Snatching the glass from the fellow's hand, he lunged at me.

One hand sought my throat while the other was extended, the glass tilted in his hand in order to pour the stuff into my mouth. Furiously cautious, I evaded the one clutching hand, and, wrenching the glass from the other with a quick twist, I flung the fiery fluid straight into his evil face. Snorting and gasping he rubbed his blinded eyes, while men sprang forward and held both of us.

My anger suddenly cooled as I remembered my position there. I stood quietly in the grasp of the restrainers. Meanwhile my enemy was bellowing like a mad bull, wild to get at me. Horrible oaths broke from him.

"Let me go, I'll kill him!" he shouted. There followed a torrent of blistering imprecations.

"Chichester," expostulated an officer indignantly, "this is a sorry spectacle for any man wearing His Majesty's uniform."

"His Majesty be damned!" vociferated the riotous subject. And I, for one among that company secretly endorsed the sentiment.

"Oh, I'll cut him to pieces!" snarled my opponent, still struggling to be free. "He questioned my descent!"

"Now, gentlemen," I urged, the ludicrous aspect of the situation suddenly striking me, "witness you all that this is not true. I did not question it."

A gust of laughter sounded, during which Militia Captain Egbert Chichester, as I found my opponent

to be, was hustled away, still bewailing in maudlin fashion the aspersion which he conceived to have been cast upon his genealogical tree. He was literally forced into his bed by some officers, where he was soothed with more drink, finally sinking into a drunken slumber.

"This Chichester is a great deal of a bully," observed Lieutenant Langham with quiet contempt. He was a fine young fellow with whom I was conversing. "You pursued the right course with him, the only one which a man with red blood in him could have taken under circumstances so exasperating. He should have received the lesson long since. He is not one of us," he explained apologetically. "His field of effort lies with the militia. This is a public place, you know, and," with an expressive shrug, "he is simply tolerated."

"I suppose I may expect a call from his friend tomorrow," I hazarded.

The lieutenant smiled, elevating his brows. "Perhaps," he drawled. "Yet, when the fellow is sobered he may reflect that these affairs are not desirable in any branch of the service. Moreover, he may recall the fact that discretion, in the matter of the preservation of one's skin, is an admirable virtue." His shoulders lifted again in an eloquent shrug.

I talked for some time with the officers, whom I found to be thoroughly good fellows. I may record that I was not again asked to imbibe. They were gentlemen and respected my recent vigorous objection to dramming. As for the snoring sot upstairs, I had learned that he was not one of them and felt relief accordingly, for 'twould have been a pity to have thus marred so gallant a crew.

As the conversation concerned the projected

annihilation of our defenses, the talk being fluently ceaseless by grace of the libations, I found myself in constant receipt of valuable information, which I mentally recorded. The work of a spy, to be sure. But a spy, at the constant jeopardy of his threatened neck, works for the honor of his flag and country, and I well knew there was not one of the gallant fellows with whom I was talking who would not welcome the chance to render his king a similar service in the land of the enemy.

It was well toward the morning when the company dispersed and I, taking leave of them, repaired to the room assigned me to sink into a heavy slumber.

CHAPTER XVIII

A DUEL AND A REVELATION

I rose early, and having breakfasted, walked down the street to the dockyards, where I could hear the incessant ring of hammers. The day was perfect. The sun flamed in the blue sky, but its heat was tempered by a cool breeze that blew from the lake, ruffling the green of the harbor.

I wandered leisurely about, using my eyes. The enemy's resources were easily double our own. His fleet was far more formidable and his land troops were largely seasoned regulars, in goodly force, contrasting dishearteningly with our own mere handful of experienced men. True, we each had also the militia, but our men were raw and untrained and I had grave doubts of their efficiency. I made no doubt that the enemy was in similar case. Then, too, there was the coalition which the enemy had effected with the Indians, whom I feared might be depended upon to smite us vengefully whenever the opportunity afforded. The redskins looked upon the settlers of the new country as interlopers, as they did the French in Canada. The English, pursuing a diplomatic course, had for years fostered the red enmity toward us, fanning it to a flame until they had secured them as pitiless allies. Red Rolfe and his band furnished a striking instance of this tactful means to a grim end, though after all,

Rolfe and his predatory cutthroats were mainly concerned for themselves, looking to their own advantage and holding themselves amenable to no regulations that conflicted with their own desires. Theirs was a guerrilla warfare of the most lawless type. Their masters were themselves disgusted with them.

But the significance of this affiliation smote me as I recalled the vivid account of the lawless leader and his red scoundrels given me by the miserly hermit I had met but a few hours previously. What of the fate of our well nigh unprotected frontier, between Niagara and Champlain, when red death should swoop down upon it in the shape of scarlet coats and their tawny allies? There was a stir of swift and deadly preparation in Frontenac, while at Oswego, Sackets Harbor, Port Putnam and Ogdensburgh, keys to the entire shore line of Ontario and the upper St. Lawrence, were feeble garrisons of mere handfuls of regular troops, tentatively supported by a raw, naturally timorous militia, unused to warfare, with inadequate munitions which no prayers of General Brown to the dilatory powers could augment.

I stood in gloomy reflection upon the dock, gazing out upon the harbor. The Royal George lay at anchor, her canvas furled, lazily cradled in the swells that slid gently under the breath of the soft wind. Several other ships lay near her, most of which, as I remembered, had assisted recently in helping the flagship to break the Sabbath. Swarms of men were still busy on the Royal George and other ships repairing the damage wrought on that memorable occasion by the Old Sow and her lesser companions. My mouth resolved itself into a grim smile, which, however, speedily froze. I turned

my back upon the prospect and slowly walked away toward the town. I had suddenly observed on the deck of the Royal George the young officer who had delivered Earle's Sunday ultimatum to John. Perhaps he had seen me at that time, as I stood close to Godfrey, and I had no wish to test the young fellow's memory for faces.

I spent some further time in quietly gaining some further facts regarding the town's defences and the plans, so far as they were made. I could not learn that there was any immediate further attack arranged, but the temper of all Frontenac showed that the sooner another was made the better they would like it. British pride had been stung to the quick by that first repulse. That a miserable hamlet like ours had withstood their sally was a source of wonder to them, and the contempt they felt for our equipment from the beginning was now tinged with a merciless rancor that boded ill for us, did they once succeed in scaling the rocky wall of our natural barrier.

After a time I walked leisurely back toward the inn, meeting knots of the soldiery on the way. I met several of the officers who had witnessed my affair with the drunken Chichester the night before. They greeted me with cordiality, and it was easy to see that my clipping of the bully's claws had produced a general satisfaction among his acquaintances.

But now, as I stood near the door of the inn, talking with some of my new acquaintances, a young fellow of forbidding countenance, in the uniform of a militia officer, approached me. I remembered to have seen him with Chichester,

assisting in holding him, after I had drenched the captain in the tap room.

"Lieutenant Stranahan, I believe, sir?" he queried.

"Yes, sir," I responded. He bore the unmistakable stamp of the emissary.

"I am Lieutenant Benson, of Captain Chichester's company," said he, "and I represent my friend and superior officer. You grossly insulted him last night. I am commissioned to request you to afford him satisfaction."

"As for the insult, sir," I responded sarcastically, "I had labored under the delusion that it was offered me. However, I am willing that your friend shall have whatever satisfaction he can obtain at any time or place."

I turned to one of my new acquaintances. "Lieutenant Carew," I inquired, "will you act for me in this matter?"

He smiled slightly. "Lieutenant," said he, "this is very irregular, so serious a quarrel between officers of the service; but I will act for you if you wish it. Meanwhile," he added, coldly addressing Lieutenant Benson, "I would suggest that all of us maintain a becoming reticence regarding this affair. When do you propose it shall occur?"

"The sooner the better," I put in savagely, for, because of the hidden delicacy of my mission, the thing annoyed me, though in honor I could not recede, nor would in any case.

"And the weapons?" continued my second. "I believe we have the choice."

"Pistols will suit me," I replied. Benson bowed and retired.

Lieutenant Carew laughed. "I expected this," he

said. "Chichester has been prize bully and cock of the walk so thoroughly here, among those whom he dared to dominate, that your dousing him last night has combined with his potations to give him a sour stomach this morning, thereby also screwing up his courage. He will shoot to kill and it behooves you to do the same. I pray you may be first—and successful."

"He seemed last night to be peculiarly punctilious about his ancestry," I mused. "It seems rather ridiculous as I recall it now."

Carew smiled sarcastically. "When in his cups," he answered, "which is most of his time, he never tires of talking of an imaginary family, whom nobody knows. I believe he boasts of noble blood. Perhaps he possesses it—on one side," a sneer accompanying the innuendo. "But, to speak seriously, it is considered generally as doubtful whether he knows of this family himself. It is believed hereabouts that he is a nameless adventurer, though he undoubtedly receives something of an income from some mysterious source. What freak drove him into the service and here, no one knows. He was probably driven from everywhere else. This fellow Benson is a satellite of his. He is, if possible, a bigger blackguard. Had Chichester not been drunk, as he, however, usually is, he would not have presumed to have affronted you last night. We were minded to interfere, but thought you amply able to take care of yourself, as you proved."

We repaired to the inn, where we were shortly joined by Lieutenant Benson, who returned with the information that our speedy answer to Chichester's challenge was a source of much satisfaction to that gentleman. The preliminaries were soon arranged.

The affair was to occur at three that afternoon in an unobtrusive spot outside the town, which I was informed had been the scene of previous affairs of a similar nature. Chichester had himself, for a trifling provocation, shot a French Canadian civilian there only a month previous.

"It was cold blooded murder," declared Carew, in speaking of the affair. "The man was almost unconversant with firearms, and Chichester, who is a good shot, knew it. He deliberately picked a quarrel with the poor devil and then called him out. It was done without the knowledge of the regulars or we would have prevented it. The man, though he knew he was doomed, went to his death like a stoic. Chichester killed him like a dog."

I said nothing, but a sullen hatred of the coward welled within me. At the noon hour we lunched. Afterward, Carew, who had a case of dueling pistols, produced them. I found them to be excellent weapons. Shortly after, Carew went out, strolling over to Chichester's quarters. He shortly returned.

"The brute is in a murderous rage against you, but his aim is likely to be deflected," he said dryly. "He has been punishing brandy all the morning I am told."

A little later we set out for the rendezvous. The matter had been well guarded, and, with the exception of two other officers who had been with Carew and myself when the challenge was delivered, none knew of it. We quickly left the town and were soon upon the spot selected. The underbrush and small timber had been cut away, forming a pleasant grove. In the center there was a large open place, the ground of which was as level as a floor.

We had been there but a few moments when

Chichester and his second, Benson, arrived. The militia captain was in an awful mood and his eyes glowed in his coarse, blotchy face like the sullen, dull-red embers of a dying fire. The lids were puffed and above the upper ones there swarmed a web-like network of tiny, swollen, red veins. The whole hateful face of the fellow, bulging with brutishness, was eloquent of alcohol and alive with low malice. He strode upon the scene without recognition of anyone present. Reaching upward to push back his cap, I observed that his hand shook slightly, the result of dramming.

My second turned doubtfully toward Lieutenant Benson. "I see you have brought no surgeon," he observed coldly. "I spoke to you this morning——"

Benson interrupted him. "There will be no necessity for one," said he, with an insulting, contemptuous glance in my direction. "The man who will fall here will be beyond the service of a surgeon." I grated my teeth. "Let it go," I told Carew, who had turned inquiringly to me. "It may be as he says."

It was soon arranged. I had nothing of fear, or even the natural nervousness I might have felt had I been about to do battle with an equal. The man before me maddened me. I was conscious only of a fierce, impelling desire to shoot to kill, when the time was come. I had never before felt the lust for blood, but there comes to most men a moment, when, confronted by some hideous, reptilian travesty of man, the thin veneer of civilization seems brushed away like a cobweb, and the primal stands out, terribly insistent, mad with the savage longing to crush, to stamp out and to destroy.

Stripped of coats and waistcoats, ready for

action, we waited the word, motionless, facing one another, right arms extended, the sun glinting the long polished barrels of our weapons. A very demon writhed in Chichester's face.

Now Carew was counting. "One,—two," and the word had hardly left his mouth when the cur opposite me fired. The ball whizzed harmlessly over my head. Chichester had aimed too high; it was the brandy.

I heard cries of "Shame!" from Carew and the two men near him. A blistering curse fell from Chichester's lips. His face told the condemning truth, for it had been no accident. He had anticipated the word deliberately and had shot to kill.

An instant's relaxation and I had again levelled my pistol full at him. The pitiful coward instinctively reeled backward, his bloated face paling visibly. I crooked my elbow and shot into the air, then threw the weapon on the ground. All the elementary passion of the primeval surged through me, the brutal, animal instinct to maim, to stamp upon, to seize a gasping throat with hungry hands and knead it in a very ecstasy of savagery.

"You damned dog!" I cried, my voice grown strange in my own ears; "you treacherous hound! Your beast's carcass is not worth a shot, you carrion! Fists were made before foils or bullets! Defend yourself!" And, wrenching myself from Carew, who tried to hold me, I rushed full at the hound.

He had the lower animal courage that marks the brute when cornered. He stood his ground, and as I reached him, he struck at me with a snarl, all the strength of his burly body behind the blow. I dodged and it grazed the side of my head, staggering

me slightly. Then I dealt him a smashing blow on the nose, breaking it and bringing a gush of blood. He fell like a log.

For the next few moments I saw only dimly and through a red haze. All the madness of maniacal fury possessed me and I gloried in it. I was vaguely conscious of raining blows upon a pulpy, battered face; of lovingly locking my two bruised hands around a fat, red throat which lent itself with pleasant softness, to the clasp, and kneading it until it cracked; of glaring with exceeding joy into an empurpled face and a pair of protruding eyeballs, like pale-blue marbles edged with red; of noting with glee the shivering and extended length of a lolling tongue. And finally I was conscious of insistent hands that tore me, reluctant, from the quivering shape on the grass; of horror stricken faces that gazed into my own.

"Good God!" I heard Carew saying, as if it had come from some one far away, "do you want to kill the man—that way?"

And then the mists gradually cleared away from my eyes and brain, and I hope my face began to look more like that of a human being. Chichester was writhing on the ground, gasping and clutching at his throat. His face was horrible. Lieutenant Benson stood by, surveying me with the scared look he might have bestowed upon a wild beast rampant.

"Don't you think, after all," I asked him with savage sarcasm, "that you would have done well to bring a surgeon?"

I turned to Carew. "Help to take care of him, will you?" I asked. 'I'm off for a stroll. I want to

be alone awhile." I left them abruptly, breaking through the underbrush, hurrying as if pursued.

My head was still whirling. The wretched affair had wrenched every fibre of my being. I smouldered with hate of the coward who had violated every tenet of the code. So had I, but my brutal retaliation for his act as yet only partially appeased me. Still, I no longer wished the cur's death; he was after all hardly worth the killing. Yet I longed to wash my hands. Ere long I came to a little brook and did so.

My knuckles were badly barked and began swelling. I filled my pipe with stiffened fingers and kept on, circling through the forest, back toward the town.

Presently I came in sight of a straggling road. Emerging upon it I found that it led to Frontenac and was sparsely lined with houses, forming an outlying district of the town. Some distance away was the shore line, the green water sparkling in the sunlight. I walked leisurely up the street, which ran parallel with the shore. Modest cottages now flanked it at intervals on either side.

Near one of these I threw myself down, reclining on the grass which fringed a neat fence enclosing the yard of the dwelling. Flowers grew within; the chirping of birds filled the air. With half closed eyes I puffed on, my troubled spirit calming as I watched the curling smoke wreaths through narrowed lids.

An incessant chirping directly over my head, attracted my attention. I looked up and saw a redbreast, perched on the fence, peering curiously at me with beady eyes. I lay quietly watching him. Presently he fluttered down, and, hopping around

almost within my reach, pecked gingerly at the grass. Curious bird, I reflected—and oddly tame.

There was a stir in the yard behind me. The bird rose in the air; his flight was strangely awkward.

"Toti!" came a voice, a voice like sweet bells. "Come here, you silly rascal!" I leaped to my feet and turned.

"Why, m'sieur!" exclaimed the voice, "M'sieur Warburton!" And standing there, sweet eyes wide and startled, white teeth gleaming through parted, smiling lips, soft hair stirring in the fragrant breeze, stood, in the flesh, herself—Renee!

CHAPTER XIX

A FRIEND IN PHILISTIA

In the flesh,—Renee! I stared incredulous, superstitious fear dilating my eyes. It was a chimera of my brain, for my head was swimming; it must be that my eyes saw things unseen; that the echoes of a voice that lived only in memory rang in my ears. But it sounded again; now with a sharper note; still like bells, but somewhat jangled.

"M'sieur Warburton," it said with some exasperation, "why do you stand and stare in that blood-curdling way? Am I so hideous? It is positively idiotic, sir!"

"Mam'selle," I said slowly, still fearing that I dreamed it, but quickened with the rush of exceeding joy; "are you really alive?"

"As you find me," she replied, demure and dimpling. "It is very warm."

"Thank God!" I burst out, stepping closer to her, seizing both her small, extended hands in mine and holding them as if I would never let them go. She stared at me blankly, wide-eyed.

"Ciel! Why such vehemence, m'sieur?" she cried. "I could understand if it were cooler."

"No, not that!" I returned, with glad impatience. "I thought you dead, Renee!"

As once before, she ignored my use of her

Christian name, unnoticed now as then. She gazed at me, mystified, her sweet eyes wondering.

"Thought me dead!" she repeated. "Jamais! But, why——"

Her eyes suddenly darkened, arrested by a flash of inquiring reflection. They swept the uniform I wore, alight with a growing scorn and anger, which I, being immune, enjoyed.

"M'sieur!" she demanded, her voice bitingly vibrant drawing away from me; "you, in that uniform? How happens that, s'il vous plait?"

I smiled at her. "Mam'selle," I submitted, "how come you to be in the enemy's country?"

"I make assurance," she rejoined with hauteur, "that is from necessity and not from choice. But, you——"

"And I," I interrupted, "can but plead the same. Should our mutual enemies," I added grimly, "suspect my real identity, I should be immediately exposed to a serious throat affection and my breathing would be permanently impaired. But they know me, fortunately, as another. Allow me to introduce to you Lieutenant Percy Stranahan, of His Majesty's Service," and I bowed.

A relieved laugh, in which rippled genuine joy, escaped her. "A nom de guerre! Ah, then, you are a spy!" she cried happily. "You are not a traitor, which seemed a horrible possibility for a moment. Pardonnez moi, m'sieur!" and she swept me a curtsey.

"Yes," I answered, with an apprehensive glance around, "but pray speak softly, mam'selle, for on this side one is apt to be held in as little esteem as the other."

"Your pardon," she rejoined. "Perhaps I should

not have used the term, but to my mind, m'sieur, the word spy is a noble one that is hateful only to the enemy. It takes resource and much of courage to be a spy, does it not?"

"I do not know," I answered vaguely. "At least, not yet. You see, mam'selle, I have not been spying long enough. Later, perhaps,——"

Her eyes had caught sight of my bruised, puffed knuckles. "Why, m'sieur," she broke in, "whatever is the matter with your shocking hands?"

"They suffered accident," I answered evasively. But being pressed, I told her of my encounter with Chichester. My heart misgave me that she would find me unspeakably brutal, but my fears were set at rest.

"M'sieur Warburton," she told me, with shining eyes, "you have at least proved that you have the courage which a spy must need and I think you have also much resource. As for that brute, you should have killed him!"

"I suppose I should," I answered ruefully, "but I flew mad and hammered him instead."

"But that is what I mean!" she exclaimed, with charming savagery. "Why did you not kill him that way?"

"But, mam'selle!" I muttered, aghast.

"O, I know what the world says of the code," she averred, "and that it debars from gentlemen the use of their fists, which God gave them, and substitutes weapons, which He did not. You did right to thrash him, je vous assure. He tried to murder you. Ah, how you must have mauled him! I should love to have seen it!" And she clasped her little hands, her eyes shining.

"Mam'selle!" I exclaimed in dismay. "No, you would not; you do not mean it!"

"I do, I do!" she retorted. "O, m'sieur, I hate a coward! Were I able, I would thrash one myself!"

It was a bewildering flash of a phase of the complex feminine nature. Strangely incongruous it might seem for the moment, yet the very tenderness that lies, like a deep pool, in the heart of a woman,—the inherent gentleness that gushes in her being like a spring,—furnishes in itself abundant explanation of the seeming anomaly. Filled with a chaste love for true nobility and the higher ideals, the base or ignoble rouses in her a spirit of the most passionate resentment, an alluring savagery. Such I now saw and began to believe that I had done a creditable thing. I gazed into her eyes, bright with an anger which I found only satisfying; into her face, flushed pink with health and heat, and was content.

"But, mam'selle," I asked, "tell me of that which concerns yourself. How came you here? Where is your father?"

"Father is inside," she answered sadly. "He is so wan, so pale, that I fear you will scarcely know him, m'sieur. He is sleeping now. You shall see him presently. As to our coming here, we came against our will and we shall return as soon as he is able."

"I know," I answered grimly. "You were brought here by the man you saw with John and me that day at the cabin, the man you were not obliged to endure at your dinner table. Do you remember?"

"True," she replied, with a startled glance at me, "but how did you know?"

"Tell me about it first," I rejoined, "and then I will tell you how we knew."

"It was a terrible experience, m'sieur," she

returned. "When you and Monsieur Godfrey left us last autumn, we passed the lonely winter quietly enough, though occasional hunters brought us startling reports of the growing trouble between the States and England and of the preparations. Finally, after what seemed an interminable time, the spring came on and brought the birds and I found comfort in them. But the reports came thicker and faster as more trappers passed our way, and father and I began to reflect that the time might be arrived for us to act as you suggested and make our way to Sackets Harbor. We were preparing to do so when there occurred the interruption.

"It was warm that day and dry, the sun shining brilliantly. Father had been ailing for several days and I was caring for him. I had just been to the river to feed my pigeons. It was about two of the afternoon and I was preparing for dinner. Father was sitting, quite ill in the living room. Though it was quite warm, he suffered from chills and was feverish. I was worried for him.

"Suddenly I heard a step, and, looking up, who should confront me, but that monster, m'sieur. He looked at us with evil eyes. Behind him, on the porch, stood several big Indians. We stared at them, father and I. The leader blinked his wicked, cattish eyes a moment, then spoke.

"'You were about getting dinner, were you, mam'selle?' he asked, in that strange, rolling voice that is so like an organ,—you remember it, m'sieur? 'Well, you need not trouble. You will dine with us further north.'

"'What do you mean?' demanded my father. 'If this is a jest, it is a sorry one.'

"'It is no jest,' replied the leader. 'If war is not declared already against this puling country, it will be very shortly. I mean to anticipate it. You and your fetching daughter, M'sieur De Montefort, will accompany me to the Canadian frontier, for certain reasons of my own.' And he bestowed upon me a look that was horrible.

"He called his savages and they swarmed into the room. He told us to prepare at once to accompany them.

"Up to now we had remained nearly paralyzed with dismay. But now my father, weak as he was, bounded from his chair and caught up his rifle, which had been resting on crotched sticks against the wall. He had shot an Indian in his tracks before they knew what he was about. Then, as they made a rush for us, I thrust a loaded pistol into his hand and he exploded it full in the face of another Indian. We dashed between them and got out of doors, but, before we could go far, they overtook us in front of the cabin, and, after a struggle, overpowered us. Father would have been killed outright by the Indians, but the white leader leaped in front of them, beating them back.

"'I will kill the first man that harms him!' he cried. 'I have my own plans! Stand back!' They sullenly obeyed him.

"As they held us there, captives, the bird Toti yonder fluttered to my shoulder. When we left he accompanied us. I carried him, m'sieur, all the way. Ah, he was comforting!

"Father and I were securely guarded by some of them, after our capture, while the leader and the others dragged the two bodies away, and I suppose buried them somewhere."

I started, at last understanding. Red Rolfe's keen and wicked wit had suggested the apparent closing of the earthly accounts and careers of the Frenchman and his daughter, for he knew how popular they were throughout the region. By this ruse, search on the part of ourselves or others would inevitably end at the cabin. It was plain to me that he had expected John and me to return. I clenched my hands at the realization of the fiend's diabolical cunning. The rude headboards! A piece of deception grimly humorous indeed.

Renee's narration proceeded. She told of the journey northward to the St. Lawrence, through the forest and by waterways in which canoes were in readiness, the party approaching the great river with swiftness. M. De Montefort grew weaker and was quite ill. Rolfe forced the savages, who would have rather killed him, to carry him through the rougher places. His daughter, torn with grief and anxiety, was more fearful for his safety than for her own.

At last they reached the St. Lawrence, at a point beyond the American settlements, crossing the broad current in their canoes. Rolfe pushed on with his party some distance into the Canadian forest, finally camping for the night. The next day they proceeded in a northwesterly direction, keeping far away from the towns that lay along the bank of the river. Renee began to be seriously alarmed. She had dared hope that she would be taken with her father to be imprisoned at Frontenac or some other Canadian town.

Had he not been so weak and ill, M. De Montefort and his daughter might have attempted escape, but it was now out of the question. The Frenchman

required the assistance of the Indians by this time to make any headway at all, and seemed to grow worse, hourly. Renee was in despair, her disquietude being increased by the evil glances occasionally bestowed upon her by the wretch who led the accursed band. But she maintained a brave front, hoping for succor from some vague source.

Progress was necessarily laborious, and, as the route was difficult, they made but a short distance the first day, stopping for the night deep in the silent woods. Early the next morning they were again astir, repeating the experience of the preceding day. So it went until they came upon a well beaten trail which led in a southwesterly direction. This they followed, making good headway.

After some time Renee made out through the trees an expanse of green water, which widened beyond some islands to the westward. A little further and she perceived that they had arrived close to the foot of Lake Ontario. Her spirits rose. So they were to be taken to Frontenac after all. They were close to the town.

But here Rolfe halted his villainous crew. He had noticed the revived animation of her face and an evil grin distorted his own.

"Here we proceed northward again, my lady," said he. "I must not pass too close to the houses just now."

"What do you mean?" she demanded. "This is the way to Frontenac."

"But I do not propose bringing you to Frontenac," he replied with a leer. "There are many there more comely than I. I should be robbed of you. This trail was convenient for a season, since it is difficult smashing through the woods, encumbered

as we are with your useless parent. But now we must get into the thick of it again, since it is to the north that my own place lies, where I shall bring you."

A slow horror gripped her. "Why do you not kill us now," she moaned, as if dazed, "my father and me?"

"Your father I may kill later, ma chere," he answered, leering the more, "if it pleases me. As for you, never, unless it be with kindness," and he made to take her in his arms. M. De Montefort, pale and trembling with anger, leaped forward but was restrained by the savages.

Renee sprang from Rolfe with a cry of fear. With a brutal laugh he was pressing forward, when his collar was grasped violently from behind and he was hurled backward.

"What is this?" demanded a man's angry voice. "My dear young woman, what is the trouble?"

A tall man confronted her, in the uniform of a British officer. He was physically in his vigorous prime, though the strong face looked seamed and old and the hair was nearly white. A heavy gray moustache shaded the stern mouth.

Renee poured out her agitated story. During the recital Rolfe remained in sullen silence, maintaining a cheap bravado. His Indians, still guarding the Frenchman, stood impassive, awaiting the word of their leader.

The officer turned to them. "Release that man!" he ordered. They looked inquiringly at the fellow they followed. He nodded sulkily and M. De Montefort was thrust violently toward his daughter and her new-found friend where he sank exhausted on the ground.

The officer spoke, bitter anger in his voice. "You who choose to call yourself Red Rolfe," he said,

"get yourself and your red cutthroats out of my sight this instant, or the pack of you shall swing in Frontenac! I wish only that one stood in my place who might kill you now, where you stand. Now go!"

And he went, without a word; went with a last baleful look out of his yellow eyes, that were like those of a blinking cat, heading for the northward, and took his red devils with him.

The officer proved to be one Major Aberdeen, standing high in His Majesty's service and a member of a distinguished English family. He would gladly have furnished M. De Montefort and Renee with safe conduct back to the American side, but the old Frenchman was now seriously ill and it was plain that he must have skilled attention at once.

In her extremity Renee found Major Aberdeen nobly sympathetic. He made arrangements for the harboring of the fugitives in the little house in which I had found them, where they were living with a pensioned old veteran, John Storrs by name, who had been with Major Aberdeen's forces through many historic campaigns. Finally retired and having followed his former commander from England, he was now living in the outskirts of Frontenac with his old wife. Medical attendance was furnished M. De Montefort by Major Aberdeen, the Frenchman being found suffering with an aggravated fever. Assiduous nursing had been given him and he was now better, though still very weak. He could not be moved for some time.

"Then you will have to remain in the enemy's country yet awhile," I observed at the close of Renee's story, with a sinking of the heart,

for I had hoped to bring them back with me.

"Yes, m'sieur," she answered gently, "but one of the enemy has proved a noble friend."

I smiled. "More than he would prove to me, should he find me for whom I am," I commented grimly.

I told her of the stirring events which had transpired since John and I had left them; of the preparations made; of the unsuccessful descent upon the harbor by Earle's ships, which account, as it had really happened, she heard with pleasure for the first time. I told of the visit John and I had made to the cabin and our discovery of the two new made graves.

Her eyes widened. "How like that charmante fiend!" she exclaimed, with rising wrath. "Tres jolie, to be sure! He intended us to be practically dead, didn't he?"

"Evidently," I returned. "And if I have the good fortune to encounter him, I trust there will be no mistake about his own demise, and his headboard will contain no lying information, except possibly his name. For no one seems to exactly know his real one."

I concluded my account with the story of the mission entrusted to me by General Brown and my experiences in Frontenac.

"But your simulation of this Stranahan," she said doubtfully. "Is it not dreadfully risky?"

I smiled, and looking about discreetly, told her something in a low tone. She nodded with quick understanding, a keen appreciation of the novel situation dawning in her eyes.

"A moment, Lieutenant," she said, "until I go in for a word with my father, for he must know you,

or rather meet you, for whom you are not. Our friend Storrs and his good wife are sturdy royalists," and she was gone. Presently she returned.

"Ye meet as strangers," she smiled. "Father will bestow upon you the languid stare of chance acquaintanceship. The Storrs, they know you simply as a British officer who has strolled hither from the garrison yonder, and, beholding me, engaged me in informal converse. We find that we have mutual friends. Then I ask you to remain to supper. The Storrs always yearn to entertain coats hued like yours."

"I will remain to supper," I said, "but shall not go back to the town. I fear Chichester's condition may lead to inquiry that would be apt to prove embarrassing to me. You know I told you that the man who sailed me here was to wait my returning a few miles above the town, in a little cove that General Brown designated. It is barely possible that he escaped drowning and his boat scuttling that night. After supper I will make my way to that point, avoiding the town, to see if I can find him. I have all the information necessary for the present and wish to avoid detection."

"I think you are right," she said thoughtfully. "I am sorry we cannot return with you, but when father is recovered, be sure we shall come to our friends. In the meantime, God keep you, m'sieur."

"And you," I answered low. We entered the house.

Lieutenant Stranahan met M. De Montefort, who acknowledged his daughter's formal introduction with no sign of former intimate acquaintance. He was sadly changed and pale with weakness, but the indomitable eye flashed a discreet welcome. The Storrs bustled about in voluble delight. Supper

was prepared. It disappeared. My vigorous exercise had sharpened my appetite.

I stood in the doorway, muttering my formal adieux, assenting to a warm hearted proposal to call again. I touched the finger tips of the girl I loved in formal parting, then was out in the gathering dusk. Gaining the road I looked back. She stood in the open doorway, dimly lovely in the gathering shadows. I turned with a heart of lightness and heaviness oddly mingled and strode on.

I gained the outlying forest by a detour through the unfrequented portion of the town. A silvery moon lent her radiance and I speedily found a trail which led along the shore of the lake, westward through the forest.

I tramped briskly along for some time, finally coming to a cove like that General Brown had described. A single boat lay close at hand. I hailed faintly. A reassuring grunt sounded in response. It was enough. I was speedily aboard.

"So you were not drowned," I observed inanely, as the taciturn helmsman, a self evident, breathing fact, was making preparations to get under way. He shook his head.

"This is a different boat," I ventured again. "Where's the other?" He pointed downward comprehensively.

"Gone to hell," he explained laconically. "I might ha' been there too, only I swam ashore. Brown said to wait here for you, so I hung around Frontenac. Saw you there this mornin'. Stole this boat from their harbor 'bout an hour ago."

We drifted out of the cove. A smart breeze caught the sail, and, headed southwest, we filled away for the Harbor.

CHAPTER XX

GRAY WREATHING MISTS

John removed his pipe from his mouth, the blue smoke curling lazily from the bowl. A slight wind, blowing from the north, ruffled the waters of the lake, which stretched far under the gray November sky, though the air was not unpleasantly chill. We stood near the brink of the bluff, the grass beneath our feet sere and brown.

"It sounds more like business yonder," said John indicating the town with a wave of his pipe. "Who knows, Gilbert, but that we may one day do something here?"

There was indeed music in the sound. The ring of hammers, in harmonious staccato, came to our ears from the dockyards, where was building the nucleus, straight from the forest yonder, of the formidable fleet with which Commodore Isaac Chauncey,—by grace of national authority, though some later misdoubted of God, the commander of the nation's naval forces upon the lakes——promised to sweep Ontario and the St. Lawrence clear of British shipping and make of Sir James Yeo but a bombastic memory. Ah, the futility of words unbacked by deeds! The historians grow eloquent of Perry, for Erie's waters in a single hour ran red with blood, while those of Ontario in three long years were scarcely tinged. Commodore

Isaac and Sir James, with all due allowances for excellent intentions, were ultra-conservatives in warfare, which fact my old hand pens more in sorrow than in anger, for the hot blood cools under the frosts of the added years and those whom I and others criticised in the olden time have long been dust.

Commodore Chauncey had arrived at the Harbor early in October. There had since been hewing in the forest and the thews of lusty brigs sprawled upon the stocks. Meanwhile, during the summer, General Brown had been hammering at the executive doors, thundering at the portals at Albany and causing earnest presentments of the necessities to be made at Washington. Now some belated good was coming out of the national capital. The garrison had received reinforcements of regulars and the defenses of the port were being strengthened, relieving the anxiety felt of another swoop from Frontenac. General Brown was anxious for a decisive movement against that Canadian port this fall, together with other towns in its vicinity, but in the interest of military precedence, Brigadier General Richard Dodge had superseded Brown at the Harbor in September. General Brown had been ordered to Ogdensburgh to take charge of the defenses there. He had gone straightway and shortly afterward repulsed a determined attack of the enemy upon that port.

General Dodge retained some companies of militia at the Harbor, among them John's and my own. They were small, neither possessing the full quota of men. Such was the elasticity of existing militia regulations that when one of us happened to be detailed for special duty elsewhere, as often

happened, the other took command of both attenuated bodies. Neither of us fared sumptuously in subordinates. What rank and file we had was composed of sturdy material. As for the under officers, there were but two worthy the name. John's Noadiah shone above his fellows with a superiority as pronounced as that, relatively, of my Cyrenus. Diametrically diverse as they were, each had in him the stuff of the real soldier.

The only engagement we had enjoyed since the breaking of that historic Sabbath by the British had been late in September. The defending force at the Harbor was then discouragingly light and a second descent from Frontenac was feared. With his usual shrewdness, General Brown, who had not yet been replaced by General Dodge, hit upon this disquieting moment for a demonstration which should result in the acquisition of some needed stores and effectually alarming the enemy for his own safety. So, to this end, he fitted out a secret expedition, under Captain Forsyth,—he had no colonels to spare,—against Gananoqui, a small British post twenty miles below Frontenac, on the St. Lawrence. John and I, with a portion of our commands, went along, a sprinkling of men being left to man the garrison. The movement proved a satisfying success. Moving quietly down the river from Port Putnam in the night, we gained the Canadian channel and landed two miles above the town in the open day. Dispersing a handful of horsemen and a detachment of indifferent militia, we marched in meagre triumph to the village, rifled the king's stores and returned unscathed. Only an appetizer, as John had remarked, and we had had nothing since.

An incident occurred during this opera bouffe affair which raised John still higher in the estimation of those at the post who loved to retail the traditions of his great strength. Cyrenus, who accompanied us in this sortie, upon seeing the force drawn up to intercept us, had in his eagerness run ahead like a terrier in advance of the rest. In a moment he was swallowed up in a brawny mess of opposing militia. It bade fair to go hard with the little man, and I ran forward as the firing began. But John pressed ahead, preceding me to the rescue. There were three of them sitting upon the swearing Cyrenus and one was in the act of presenting a loaded pistol at his head when John arrived. The giant knocked the weapon from the fellow's hand, and, seizing him and the man next him by the scruffs of their necks, he tore them from Bantwell's writhing body and crashed their heads together. They fell. The third man levelled his rifle and tried to shoot John, but I was there by then and wrenched the gun from him. John seized him, and, sinking on one knee, he doubled the Canadian, who was a brawny wight, over the other as if he had been a sack of meal. Then, drawing his short sword, he belabored the enemy's trousers with the flat of it until he howled for mercy. Upon being released, the man ran to his fellows, who were slowly backing as they fired. Then John turned to Cyrenus.

"You confounded little whiffet," he growled, "don't get ahead of the procession next time!" Cyrenus grinned, and told the story till he died.

We had seen no active service since this small skirmish, which was modest enough. We had been busy enough, however, especially since the arrival

of Commodore Chauncey, in preparing for another possible call from the enemy. We knew that Sir George Provost had forces far superior in numbers to our own at Frontenac, Prescott and other convenient towns, Frontenac possessing the most formidable resources. He also had troops in plenty at the head of the lake. We marveled that he did not come to annihilate us. But as he deferred his visit, we improved our time.

John knocked the ashes from his pipe impatiently. Lost in a reverie, I was gazing out upon the lake that stirred with the fanning of the wind.

"Gilbert," burst out John testily, "is winter to come without the semblance of a blow being struck? I'm tired of this old woman's game."

"So say we all, John," I rejoined, "but what's the use? Come back to the barracks."

We left the bluff, sauntering slowly toward the town. He swung along with a free, splendid grace, his black, luxuriant beard and piercing eyes giving him the air of a buff and blue brigand. His swarthy face was tanned the darker with exposure; in beholding him, one derived the impression of vast strength, measureless and terrible. There was that in his appearance, too, that rendered his English name strangely incongruous. His face suggested the Latin races, and, though his actions were marked with a thorough steadiness and a certain calm, quiet shrewdness, I had often caught glimpses of a fiery, impetuous spirit behind the cool, reserved exterior. Knit together as we were in the bonds of our strange friendship, he was still an unsolved puzzle to me. I knew but little more of him than what tradition had told before I met him. I had informed him of my encounter with

the eccentric miser in the Canadian forest and of the old man's account of his extremity and rescue. He smiled slightly, acknowledged that he was Pitou's deliverer and said no more.

Musing upon the strange, baffling personality of my companion, I walked with him in silence to the quarters. There a surprise awaited me. An odd gray nag, a nag of years and unquestionable respectability, stood saddled and bridled at my door. I would know the animal anywhere. It was Abner Holcomb's.

As I gazed speculatively at the beast a listless footstep shuffled and Abner stood in the doorway of the quarters, regarding me with sepulchral solemnity. Woe illimitable brooded in his faded eyes; dejection rioted among his drooping whiskers. His voice was dreary as an owl's hoot at midnight.

"Betsey'll run the farm," he announced.

I made to look as if I considered it a new arrangement. "It's a great sacrifice for you, Abner," I murmured hypocritically.

He gloomed with tobacco munching jaws. I watched them fascinated. Did he champ in his sleep? At last he answered.

"It is that," he agreed. "But you're needin' men. Betsey, she kep' at me. And here I be." His sombre eyes, diverted from space, ranged upward till at last they rested on John's amused face. "Who's yer pardner?" he inquired drearily.

I introduced them, John grasping a listless hand. Abner still continued his survey, his expression, as always, like a mournful somnambulist's.

"I suppose you want to enlist now?" I said.

"Yuh," he answered, without the faintest thrill

of martial spirit in his tone, "in your company. Betsey, she said to look you up."

I led him, this bewhiskered lamb, to the slaughter, and the deed was done. Betsey the persistent, Betsey the indomitable, had conquered. In spite of rheumatism and responsibilities Abner and the farm had parted company. It was a final crushing proof that Betsey was able to run both.

I left Abner, munching in sorrow, in the ruthless hands of Sergeant Cyrenus, who had pounced upon him, as he always did with raw recruits, with ghoulish glee, reckoning him as appreciated prey to be licked into shape. Then I returned to the quarters.

"Well, upon my soul," laughed John, "if you don't land some curiosities in the shape of recruits. First Cyrenus, and now——"

"Meanwhile," I reminded him, with leering triumph, "you have Noadiah."

He properly subsided. "True," he murmured. "How could I have forgotten Noadiah?"

We busied ourselves about the barracks awhile, but time dragged for me. Looking restlessly about my eyes noted the dockyards. Ships were being overhauled and canvas stretched.

"When does Chauncey propose to sail?" I asked with lowered voice.

"To-morrow," replied John. "He will sail out and see if he can run across any of Yeo's boats. I hope we will have a chance to go. I am not conversant with the plans, but they may want to land a force somewhere."

"God grant it," I commented, watching the preparations. "I think I will take a small cruise myself, just out to Snake Island," I added suddenly. "Want to come along?"

"No," he answered, again fishing out the inevitable pipe, "I've some work to do. If you run across Yeo's fleet, bring it back with you."

I left the barracks for the docks. My own boat, a small affair that slipped through the water as if greased, was close at hand. I had her ready in short order. Gliding out around the point into the bay, I skimmed on with a favoring wind. The waves were rising as the breeze had grown stronger. The lake was flecked with tiny whitecaps. I flew on, past Snake Island, determining to keep on to Stony, a larger patch several miles out from the town, where I might glimpse the enemy's fleet. There would be ample time to return before nightfall, and if not, I knew the lake like a book. I needed only the lights of the Harbor in case of a shifting wind and consequent delay. It was an ideal day for sailing. My spirits rose as I sped on through the sliding waves.

The boat rushed on, sail taut in the long, low sweep of the wind, diving and skimming, riding the hissing, pounding surge like a swallow. With occasional short tacks it took but a brief time to reach the island. I anchored in a deep place close to shore, and lowering the sail, jumped to a projecting point of land and walked across, scanning the vast expanse of the rolling open lake. A flash of sunlight broke through the gray vault overhead, glinting the sail of a distant small vessel. Nothing of Yeo's squadron was, however, to be seen. A moment more and the sombre curtain closed again. The transitory flash was gone.

I threw myself down with my back against a tree trunk and became lost in a wistful reverie, my gaze bent to the northward. My eyes beheld but the

tossing waters, sullen beneath the shadow of the cheerless sky. Nothing of life was in sight except a few birds wheeling across the heaving swells, and far out, a splotch of white in the gray, a solitary sail, moving to the west. The wind was dying now. The wash of the surf on the stone-strewn beach sounded in my ears, rhythmically interminable. The low monotone of the wind grew fainter, a lulling calm stealing over me, for I was fatigued with the arduous work of the past days. I had but to close my eyes and it was another autumn. The woods loomed, many-hued and fragrant. I trod a path that wound serpent-like through the dim reaches; over mossy logs, green and cool in their decay; walking upon a carpet of the fallen glory of the turning leaves. Through the balsamed stretches of the forest a voice echoed, silvery sweet, for she walked before me, rifle resting in the hollow of a rounded arm; straight and supple, altogether lovely. At times the piquant charm of a bewitching half-profile was vouchsafed me; an alluring challenge shot back at me from the corner of a clear eye, blue-green, like the sea; her laughter bubbled like a spring. Still we walked on, over the dead leaves and crumbling logs, through a labyrinth of tinted foliage. Now the brawl of the little river,—snarling among its tiny eddies, dashing impotently against the great grim rocks that were drenched with spray,—sounded close at hand. We emerged at the little clearing and I threw myself upon the bank. Her strange call sounded and the pigeons came to her, flying to be fed. Even as I watched, they floated about and over her till I could no longer see her, could only hear her rippling laughter in the midst of the white feathered cloud which

grew and grew till it seemed to have spread across the face of the sky and obscured the sunlight. It grew cold and dark, but still the cloud widened, ceaselessly billowing, floating heavily between earth and sky. I scrambled to my feet with a cry of fear and dilated eyes.

Strange gray shapes wreathed about me, dim and ghostly; the wash of the surf sounded monotonously near me, but I could not see it; the air was damp and chill. A moment served to collect my scattered senses and I laughed, a trifle grimly.

"If one will nap here in November, one must take the consequences," I muttered. While I had slept there had come a heavy fog, common on the lakes, so dense that it was like an impenetrable gray wall. The chill had finally awakened me.

Cursing my inopportune napping, I slapped my stiffened legs, and, swinging my numbed arms to restore circulation, I stumbled across the island to the opposite shore to reach my boat, meaning to go aboard and get into a greatcoat which I had there and wait for the fog to lift.

I knew my route and it was not a difficult task to find the place where I had moored the boat, as it was just inside a small point of projecting land. Groping in the mist, I found the point, made my way out upon it and leaped for the boat.

I came down in about ten feet of cold water, reaching the surface dazed and gasping. Regaining the land, I fell to shivering and cursing myself anew, for it was plain that there was no boat there. It had not been properly secured and had drifted away.

Some moments I expended in shaking and reflecting dismally upon my dilemma. But now,

through good fortune, the vagrant breezes were returning. To my great satisfaction I saw the fog dispersing, sullen and distorted.

Presently, through the wreathing vapor, I made out, at convenient distance from the shore, a vague, drifting shape. My boat had evidently not gone far. Without more ado I plunged in.

The icy water chilled me to the marrow and I swam vigorously. Presently I reached the craft, and, laying hold of the side, made to draw myself up. The boat tipped violently. In that instant a shadowy shape loomed over me, brawny hands seizing me by the collar. A moment more and I was hauled, like a meal sack, over the side and dumped, half strangled, into the bottom of a strange boat. A lantern was thrust into my face, my eyes blinking in the glare. A voice sounded, round with surprise.

"Well, I'm blowed if it isn't Lieutenant Stranahan!" it said.

CHAPTER XXI

IN FRONTENAC

I recognized him, though his face showed indistinct in the gray, rolling fog, in which the lantern's glimmer glowed palely. He was the man who had served as my second in the difference with the cowardly British ruffian, Chichester.

"This is something of a surprise, Lieutenant Carew," I remarked, summoning my wits to meet this emergency. "It is curious that you and I should be engaged simultaneously in similar missions."

This was a chance hazard, but I had come to the instantaneous conclusion that Carew and the man with him had been in quest of secret information on our side. To betray any hesitation would assuredly not do. I was in a bad box and must produce the impression that I was in the business of the man I was supposed to be.

"Don't you recognize Lieutenant Beresford, Stranahan?" asked Carew, "though of course it is so dark that you naturally would not, separated as you are. We're all together in this business, for our necks run similar risks."

"True," I muttered, though I felt at the moment that my own ran a far greater one than theirs just now, had they but known it.

Here was an added difficulty. I found myself greeting a friend of Carew's, a young fellow I had

met in Frontenac. With two such acquaintances it would pay to be doubly diplomatic.

"How curious you should fall in with us, quite literally, too, in just this way, Stranahan," remarked Beresford, with lively curiosity. "Did you swim after us from the Harbor? And I thought you were at Oswego."

"Just came from there," I answered lightly, "and as for the swim, well, no. The water is somewhat too cold. The truth is I am here through my own carelessness," and I went on to explain that I had stopped at the island, just as the fog closed down, to wait for its lifting and had improperly secured the boat. "The craft belongs to a young Yankee officer. I secured it this afternoon," I told them with perfect truth. "This cursed fog settled when I was within a couple of miles of the island yonder. I did not care to be out in it, so made for the land. I must either have anchored her insecurely or the rope parted. As it is, she is drifting somewhere out yonder, while she ought to be in readiness to start for Frontenac as soon as the fog lifts. I thought it was she when I was drawn into yours."

"Don't let it worry you, Stranahan," said Carew, with reassurance unconsciously ironical. "You can go to Frontenac with us, since we are returning there."

So this was the trick Fate had played me! I was glad the mists obscured my face, which must have looked dubious enough. But I gave vent to an exclamation of satisfaction.

The boat was moving slowly forward through the ghostly vapor. "If I thought this would not lift before long," observed Carew, who was at the tiller, "I would put in for the island myself. But I

think it will soon be gone, for the wind is rising." Sure enough, the water of the lake was rippling; the gray masses stirred uneasily around us. It grew lighter; presently a gust of air filled the sail.

"It is strange we have not run across each other," I hazarded, "though to be sure, I have been everywhere from Oswego to Ogdensburgh in the past two months, reporting at odd times to Montreal. I finally made this last trip to the Harbor, coming from Oswego in the guise of a militia officer. I have been here a couple of days. You must have started for home this afternoon soon after I did."

"An hour or two later, I should judge," answered Carew. "It was pretty misty when we started, but we feared that suspicion was attaching itself to us and considered home as better than the possibility of stretched necks. We arrived from Watertown just a little while ago. We had been hastily looking over the ground there. It's a flying trip for the immediate benefit of the authorities at Frontenac. These fellows are better prepared than formerly. As for returning, we saw old Miles Osgood below the Harbor. He, as you know, is always ready with a boat and timely aid for those in our line, provided he receives a proper financial consideration."

I had not positively known it, but registered a mental mark against Miles, whom I had previously suspected of being a snivelling old hypocrite and all things to all men. We would deal with him later.

"They are better prepared, as you say," I said, "but I think we can make short work of them."

"I think we stand a fair chance of doing so," he answered, "when we attempt it over the ice this winter."

Here was something worth remembering. Perhaps,

on the whole, a trip to Frontenac just now might benefit our cause, and anyway, I had no choice. The wind was now blowing quite hard and from a favoring quarter, the boat skimming swiftly ahead. Stony Island was far behind us and we were approaching Canadian waters with accelerated speed. The fog had nearly vanished. It was deep dusk and already a few pale stars glimmered in a sky blown nearly clear of clouds. My nap had evidently lasted some time. I resolved to make the best of the situation.

A sudden reflection filled me with swift satisfaction. Through a strange circumstance I was afloat for Frontenac. Well and good. Renee was in Frontenac. I would see her; my pulse stirred at the thought. Perhaps her father was recovered and they awaited opportunity to reach the shores where lay their sympathies. If so, I might be able to assist them. Were they now able to come, I felt that I possessed resource sufficient to find a way to bring them. My previous visit, together with the general acceptance in Frontenac's military circles of myself as Lieutenant Stranahan, had given me confidence. What I had done I could do again, especially as my appearance in the boat admitted of so reasonable an explanation. Carew, I know, never dreamed of doubting me, and I was confident also of Beresford's lack of suspicion.

I was at no small advantage in revisiting Frontenac in that my real headquarters, as Stranahan, were at Montreal. Stranahan's mission had been of a delicate nature. He had come to grief at the very first, though his friends had not learned of it, and, I hoped, never would while I was on that side of the water. During the lengthy period that I simulated him I crossed boldly to Frontenac,

Gananoqui, Prescott and other towns, conferring with sundry officers and sending messages from these points to Montreal, messages that were sufficiently near to the truth to avoid unpleasant complications that would threaten my personal safety and lead to the discovery of the hoax, but messages, nevertheless, that never materially harmed our cause. While I was on the other side I naturally gleaned information at first hand that was of the most valuable nature to us, though I had some exciting experiences in doing it, and, more than once, feared that the grim game was up.

Sometimes, by arrangement with Montreal, the simulated Stranahan would despatch his matter from our own ports. The details of this cunningly arranged plan I had learned on capturing Stranahan and communicated them to General Brown. It was then that my continued double identity was decided upon. General Brown was more cordial in his expressions of appreciation of my willingness to keep up the illusion than I thought I deserved, for it was only my duty. But he paid me the compliment to maintain that he could summon but few men of like nerve to aid him, and I will say that he hesitated considerably before giving his consent to the project, for it was originally my own proposal. I doubt if a gentleman ever played the spy under more peculiar circumstances than those which fell to me.

Naturally a clever penman, I had mastered Stranahan's chirography, having plenty of specimens in my possession from which to copy. It was a very fair forgery, which fact is attested by the additional one that it was never detected. The messengers of whom I have spoken would enter

our ports with an exaggerated caution which was superfluous, had they but known it, for their coming was invariably known and they were allowed to reach me without molestation. However, the illusion of danger was always maintained, and I occasionally arranged a little diversion in the way of a hairbreadth escape from apprehension that merely quickened the blood of the messenger, while it did me good rather than harm, for he carried back tales of the dangers that infested my pathway and the skill with which I avoided them. A joke of the matter was that it was known in Canada that I had joined the Yankee army and had secured the rank of captain under a supposedly assumed name. I had explained at the very first that I would be better able to care for England's interests by taking this course, and represented that I had joined the Militia as a lieutenant, after the attack on Sackets Harbor, it being understood that I was from Albany, and had soon been made a captain. I represented, too, that I had contrived to be sent hither and yon on missions that gave me a free rein to advance the interests of the British cause. The impression which they entertained of my standing did me untold good. I might change from place to place; I might appear against them in battle, if necessary, and they would think it done for policy's sake. It was a bold game, but thanks to the strange circumstances, it was for a long time comparatively easy.

I met the messengers during that war at all of our ports from Oswego to Ogdensburgh, at different times, and at many of their own. Once I had the hardihood to meet, by appointment and under orders from Montreal, a council of officers at

Prescott, at which I flatter myself I was the means of staving off, through a convenient magnifying of our resources, present and anticipated, a threatened attack upon us until we could the better prepare for it. As I look back upon those experiences I wonder that Nemesis did not overtake me long before she did.

So, to revert, it was with a fairly easy spirit that I considered the prospect of this involuntary return to Frontenac. We skimmed along at high speed. The sky had entirely cleared and a crescent moon gleamed among the studded stars.

The air had a wintry chill and I shivered in my wet clothing. Carew proffered me a greatcoat. Beresford offered a flask. I took both and was comforted.

Carew was an excellent sailor and evidently knew the lake. As we flew along he and Beresford, both of whom wore the uniforms of Yankee militiamen, recounted their experiences on our side and I supplemented them with some imaginary ones. I gave them some valuable misinformation about matters of which I well knew they had not learned enough themselves to dispute me, and they, in their turn, let fall some comment about matters at Frontenac which I mentally recorded for future reference.

I was helped materially by the fact that they did not know Stranahan personally. I did not particularly wish to encounter an acquaintance of his. However, there was small danger of this if I succeeded in keeping away from Montreal, for it will be recalled that the unfortunate officer had arrived from England only a few days before receiving the commission which resulted in his undoing.

We made good time, and the fifty miles from the Harbor to Frontenac were negotiated by one o'clock of the morning. Gliding into the harbor, we secured the boat and walked from the dock up the quiet street to the King's Inn, where both my companions put up. The weasel faced host responded in person to our summons. He eyed me with disfavor for a moment. Suddenly remembering, I paid him the reckoning for my former visit, when I had left unceremoniously without taking time for that formality.

"It is Yankee coin," I said, with a wink at him and my two companions, "but that is what we have been using lately." He nodded comprehensively and became urbane. Ambling amiably ahead, he assigned me a room. Before retiring I had a word with Carew.

"When leaving Montreal, I was of course obliged to leave the incriminating red behind," I observed with a laugh. "Can you have me fitted out in the good old regimentals in the morning?"

"Surely," he replied. "We will attend to it."

I had reflected that by getting again into the British uniform less attention would be attracted to me and the chances of maintaining the hoax would be improved. So, when we had breakfasted together, Carew took me to the custodian of the stores and I was clothed, having my own damp uniform dried before being wrapped up for future reference, as I observed, with a deeper significance than Carew knew.

I spent the morning in carelessly strolling about, absorbing information. The military force had been strengthened and more accessions to Yeo's fleet were in building. I met many of my former

acquaintances, but did not come across Chichester, which gave me satisfaction. I understood from a disgusted officer, however, that he was lying drunk at his quarters, the effect of an orgy the night previous. There seemed to be a general satisfaction over the drubbing I had given him and I found my popularity increased by it.

Dinner done, I was idling about the docks, after conversing with a knot of officers who had just strolled away. Suddenly glancing around, I saw a man approaching. Without ostentation I slipped around a lumber pile.

He had not noticed me, but walked slowly down to the dock, where he stood gazing out upon the green flood. My fingers itched to gripe his wicked neck, bull-like, sprinkled with coarse, red hairs. His mottled, brutal face, covered with a wiry red beard, was the embodiment of sodden brutality. His burly body was clothed in a nondescript dirty uniform. His big, coarse hands were clasped behind his back. A while he remained, gazing out upon the lake, then reflectively spat into the sullied water. A moment later, he turned, retracing his steps to the town, limping slightly.

I clenched my fists as I saw him go. "At the proper time and place, Red Rolfe, or whoever you are!" I muttered. "Satan will forget to guard you some day, and then——"

Toward evening I strolled away from the town in the direction of the little house on the outskirts where I expected to find Renee and her father. As I walked up the straggling street, nearing the spot which held all of life for me, my breath came fast and the blood buzzed in my head. I was to see her again! And yet, at the moment, a sickening doubt

intruded. I had heard nothing. What, after all, if I should find them through some mischance gone? My heart grew leaden and my steps likewise. The sun, low in the west, took on a tinge of red; the air was crisp with an added coolness.

I approached the house, my heart thumping noisily, a tentative question in my eyes. A cat sat in state upon the gatepost, a black cat with strange eyes that blinked uncannily. Her tail cleft the air like a belated benediction. As I approached the creature, she bent her yellow eyes full upon me, now unchanging, unwinking as the stony gaze of the sphinx. A moment thus she gazed, then her jaws gaped idiotically and she yawned placidly into space. The tension was broken. I laughed.

"Bon soir, monsieur," sounded a sweet voice in greeting. "I perceive that your sense of the ridiculous is not blunted by the tooth of time."

I started. There she stood, a vision all of earth and therefore the lovlier; the red gleam of the dying day in her gold-brown hair; the rich carmine of young, bounding blood in her round cheeks; all the sweetness of her in the eyes that blended the wonderful tints of the sky and sea beneath a royal sun.

"From where did you come?" I asked her, giddy with a glad relief, seizing the little hands that were extended in greeting.

"From the porch, while you were watching the cat," she responded demurely.

"I will kill the cat," I observed, and cast about for a missile. The animal yawned once more in supreme content and I desisted.

"That's right," commented Renee, nodding sagely, "that you relent. It is a nice cat. Would you believe it?—it is a friend to Toti. I taught

it so, m'sieur. But why are you here, Lieutenant—er—what did you say your name was? Are you spying again?"

"My name," I told her severely, "is still largely Stranahan. I am spying a little, but quite accidentally. Moreover, I have come for you and your father if you are ready." And I told her about it.

She gazed earnestly into my eyes, a little moisture in her own. "We will return with you if it can be brought about," she said simply. "My father is quite strong again and his desire is with the land of his adoption. Our benefactor has been away from Frontenac for some time, but his retainers, with whom we have made our home, have done everything possible for us. We can never repay them for their kindness, and, m'sieur, how much less can we repay you, you who take this risk for our sakes? It hurts me when I think of how my father and I are forced to impose ourselves, with our fallen fortunes, upon others," and her lips quivered.

"Mam'selle," I answered with mock sternness, a lump rising in my throat, "let there be an end of this. As for the risk, allow me to remind you that I could not help myself. As for the imposition, as you term it, let your memory whisper to you. Moreover, let me assure you that you will be kept busy enough at Sackets Harbor. There is plenty of work for women's hands there in the advancement of the cause. I'll warrant you'll wish you were back in Frontenac. But in the meantime, you may rest assured of a warm reception at the hands of my father and sister, who already love you for the poor life you saved."

"Why, m'sieur," she faltered in confusion, "surely we cannot think of coming to your home. We had thought we would find a little place somewhere——"

"Mam'selle!" I interrupted, "no more of this! Who saved my worthless life? Who brought the color back to my bleached face with tender nursing? Besides, our house is a headquarters for our friends. John is there. We have grown inseparable."

"That is good," she said simply, "such amitie. He is huge and magnificent. Let us walk around to the orchard. My father is there."

We found M. De Montefort seated under an apple tree, pulling comfortably at a long pipe and reading a newspaper. With no restraining Storrs around us, he was unaffectedly glad to see me. I told him of past events, of my involuntary trip to Frontenac and of the plan I had formed. He warmly acceded to the proposition to return, but I encountered opposition when I spoke of their coming to our home.

"I cannot do that, M'sieur Warburton," he said, the blood mantling his fine old face. "As it is, I shall not rest until I have succeeded in paying these good people here for their entertainment of us. Ma foi! Renee and I would rather take our chances again at the little cabin!"

"Monsieur," I replied, "last autumn, when I lay torn in the woods, you ministered unto me. Your daughter gallantly saved the life of a stranger, and then you took him in, nearly breaking your back to do it. You both nursed him back to health, nor could have cared more tenderly for him had he been a brother and a son. Now, I beg of you, let

me and mine show, in small degree, our appreciation. Besides, I can readily promise you that you shall be busy there. I gather, monsieur, that you are acquainted with military matters?"

"I was once, in France," he returned, with a wistful smile.

"Then," I rejoined triumphantly, "you need not worry about dependence, as you choose to term it. I can secure you all you will want to do, and, as for this young lady, I have promised her the opportunity to work her fair fingers to talons, if she elects to be so foolish."

They both laughed and I saw that I had struck the right note. Relieved to find that I had met the difficult task of dealing with these two sensitive natures, I grew exuberant, succeeding in imparting some of my enthusiasm to them.

We decided that in order to avoid all suspicion, the Storrs should be told that their guests would start in a day or two for Montreal, accompanied by myself, to join friends who were there. It came as we arranged. We told the old people at supper, they being profuse in expressions of real regret. They remembered my previous visit and had no suspicion that I was another than I seemed.

Renee confided to me after supper that she disliked to deceive the old people, but that necessity knew no law, to which I agreed. Shortly after supper I left for the town and spent the night at the King's Inn.

The next day was uneventful, but the succeeding morning ushered in one of intense excitement in Frontenac. Toward noon the Royal George, Yeo's most formidable ship, came rushing, under

full sail, into the harbor, to anchor under the protection of the land batteries and the guns of the fort. As he swung around, his guns, pointed out over the water, spoke hoarsely. From far up the lake there came an answering roar.

The dock was soon thronged and the truth speedily learned. The morning after my unexpected departure from the Harbor, it appeared Commodore Chauncey had sailed out for the first time with his pennant on the brig Oneida, and having in company five armed schooners with nearly five hundred men and many marines. Chauncey intended to intercept Yeo's vessels on their coming from Fort George, where they had taken reinforcements, and from which their return was daily expected. But Chauncey chanced to fall in with the Royal George near the False Ducks and chased him into the Bay of Quinte, where he was lost in the night. The next morning he followed him to Frontenac's harbor, as I have said.

Chauncey's ships were soon in sight and I beheld them approach with exultation. I looked for a successful storming of the defences and rather forgot my own danger at the prospect. But though a tremendous cannonade began, our ships did not draw close enough to work any effectual damage, though the Royal George had received several shots between wind and water. Afterward Chauncey reported that "he found the defences stronger than he expected." I, who was there, am at a loss to know how he found them so, as he seemed not close enough to adequately tell.

With the coming of evening, our fleet stood off and anchored until the morning. Here was my opportunity. Making arrangement for a skiff,

which my uniform procured for me unquestioned, I hurried to M. De Montefort and Renee, advising them of the situation. Getting together their few belongings, including Renee's robin, we took leave of the fugitive's benefactors, telling them that a ship was to slip out that night for Montreal. Gaining the boat we had in readiness, we pulled for Chauncey's flagship, far outside the harbor. By miraculous good fortune we got away unobserved. I had located the Oneida early in the evening and pulled swiftly toward it in the gloom. Presently we neared it. A low hail attracted the attention of the vigilant watch upon the deck and the three of us were presently assisted over the side.

"A greeting, friends!" boomed a deep voice beside us. We turned.

It was John.

CHAPTER XXII

A WINTRY INTERLUDE

Commodore Chauncey soon raised his brief blockade of Frontenac and the fleet returned to the Harbor with a happy quartet aboard the Oneida. Some heavy gales followed, and soon the ice closed in, stopping navigation for the season. At the Harbor and at Frontenac preparations went merrily forward for the succeeding campaign. For our part, instead of carrying the war into the enemy's country, the army of the north had been hard put to it to protect its own borders. The land campaign of 1812 had been scarcely a success. We had the blunders of Hull at Detroit and Dearborn's farcical "Canadian invasion" to rectify. The enemy also had some galling memories of errors to be expunged in action, and work was afoot in Frontenac, particularly in brig building. Commodore Chauncey was not idle in this regard. The Madison was launched in November, being built in forty-five days, and the brigs Jefferson and Jones were completed in the following spring, at which, time, too, the keel of the General Pike was laid. Crews from illustrious men o' war, afloat on the Atlantic, were sent to the Harbor to man the brigs and there was every indication that Congress expected Ontario and the St. Lawrence to become the theatre of notable naval doings, which might

ultimately result in a wholesale changing of maps. The expectation, however, was not destined to be realized.

The winter, rigorous in northern severity, closed down upon us who hibernated in the isolated hamlet, flanked by the bare, desolate forest, facing the frozen lake. But we, through the white-stoled season, were content, for it was a congenial company in my father's house. Renee and M. De Montefort had received a warm welcome for my sake, and it was but a breath of time before my father and sister valued them for their own. The two girls became inseparable and labored together for the good of the warriors in winter quarters. I had told Renee that she would not lack for occupation and my presage proved true, for there was much to be done by the loyal women of the village. I had secured an excellent post for M. De Montefort in the quartermaster's department, which afforded him great satisfaction, for he had a wholesome horror of anything approaching dependence. The securing of the berth, which was one of some responsibility, had gratified me, for I knew we should never have kept him otherwise. I desired his company, and, more than his, his daughter's.

The Frenchman and my helpless old father became the best of comrades. The gallant old man, doomed to watch in enforced inaction a contest in which his indomitable soul would have willed his body in the thickest of it, found in the emigré a kindred spirit. Thus, with John and John's hound, not to forget Renee's impudent robin, we made a rarely pleasant circle.

Our days were busily spent, for there was work for all who might perform it at the Harbor. We

rose with the gray dawn for the early breakfast which the maids had prepared, then departed for our tasks; John, M. De Montefort and I for the barracks and multitudinous duties; the girls for the various missions that women's hands in those troublous days could find to perform. Sometimes they were busy with tasks that admitted of performance at home, but oftener it was away. There was much sickness in barracks that winter and the health of many a gallant fellow was restored through the patient nursing of the noble women at the Harbor.

The hopes and plans that required infinite labor for fulfillment made our days busy indeed in the ice-locked, snow-bound port. But in the long winter evenings, when the tasks of the day were done, as I look back upon them through the mists of the swift-flown years, they were perfect; they were ideal. For they marked that epoch that comes, touched with a strange, sad tenderness, to the life of that fortunate man in whose soul there dawns, in golden glory, the one deep, true love for the one woman; the love that is pure and godlike, that is mellow as ripened grain, that fills eternity. Ah, this golden time, whose memories throb like pulsing music in the after years; memories so softly wistful to us who passed through earth's Eden and found it, ere we knew, behind us!

And so it was with me through the long, white-stoled winter, the winter of bitter cold and leaden skies, with the north wind wailing across the sullen, ice-sealed waste of old Ontario and the white flakes eddying in the teeth of the blast. The desolate little hamlet, set forlornly between the grim, illimitable forest and the great, frozen lake, locked in winter's

bonds, would have been dreary indeed, but she was there and glorified it. She would have made for me an unending summer of Siberia.

My cheeks are furrowed and such hair as is mercifully left me is long since gone gray. But as I sit dreamily at the window, the sweet shadow of other eyes falls, like a curtain, over my old ones and I live again those winter nights of my yesterday. I see my father, helpless in his chair, close by the glowing fireplace with its crackling logs in the great living room; M. De Montefort in close converse with him; the gigantic John, sprawled in his huge chair, the inevitable pipe between his teeth, his hound at his feet. I see my sister seated near Renee, myself nearby, where I might look unrestrained upon the lovely face of the girl I loved so deeply and so silently. I hear the music of her voice, the music that could banish the oppression that came of the wail of winter winds that mourned and would not be comforted. Till the sum of my years is done, I pray that this memory remain; the sight of her face in my old eyes, the music of her voice in my ears.

I dared not yet speak to her of the love that made me truer and more manly, for such is the necromancy that purges men's natures of their superabundant dross, to finally reveal the pure metal beneath. But when the others had gone these winter evenings and were sinking into well-earned slumber; when the world outside was a study in the starry black and ghostly white of sky and snowbanks, and the peace of a perfect silence was undisturbed save but by an occasional snore from Godfrey's hound, lying near me, I was sometimes wont to sit alone before the fireplace in the living room

and stare in reverie at the glowing logs. In the tongues of flame that leaped up the great, gaping chimney I dreamed a promise in rosy clouds. When peace was compassed, when the racked land ceased to groan and the sword had become a ploughshare, then perhaps hope might claim its heritage. And as the blissful dream brought a tender hope for the future, there stirred memories of the pleasant past; a past so recent, yet so long ago in that since then the world had changed for me and become merged in a sweet woman to be won. The tide of recollection bore me, drifting in dreams, back through that autumnal season; back to the forest with its ripened foliage, its vista of tented shade, through which the gold of the sunlight glinted the smiling shadows. I heard again the snarl of the little stream, biting futilely at the boulders of its bed. The cries of birds came to me, the rustlings of startled wood creatures. And through the restful solitude of nature, over the crumbling, moss-grown logs, through brushing masses of fern, subtly sweet, following a tortuous path that wound through Arcady, we walked together, Renee and I, for always——

Until a charred log burned through and fell, sending a shower of sparks flying up the chimney, or the hound, dreaming of some blood-stirring deed in his crowded past, stirred uneasily with a sharp yelp, bringing down the fabric of my dream in rude, chaotic ruin about my ears. And I, recalled to realities, would brand myself a fond fool with savage emphasis and betake myself disconsolately to bed. Arcady, indeed! Pleasant, to be sure, but others peopled it, others as eager for and doubtless worthier of favor than I. For there were certain

other young officers at the garrison who found our house a magnet; gallant, admirable fellows. I hated them all.

Still, not all, for some there were who paid court at the shrine of Dorothy. These I secretly approved and would fain have bequeathed to my sister an embarrassment of masculine riches for her choosing by bestowing upon her gentle graces the entire gallant crew. Still, had this been the case and the allegiance, instead of being divided between two fair women, had been all bestowed in the quarter I told myself I wished it directed, and I been left in the undisturbed and sole possession of the society of the woman I loved, I know I should have been fully as piqued and resentful at such neglect as I was under the circumstances actually existing, in which there was nothing of neglect. For such is this ludicrous contradiction of le grande passion, the lover rejoicing in and yet chagrined because of homage paid by others to the charms of his choice.

So it transpired that some of these winter evenings were the source of much discomfort to me, who sat glum and glowered unobtrusively at times when a pair of other eyes gazed deep into those that now held the light of the world for me and another voice than mine framed sallies and light nonsense that brought the sparkle to her eyes and the bubbling of soft laughter to her lips. There were several of these intruders and they were always coming, to my intense though concealed disgust. For Dorothy's delegation I had merely an amiable and kindly interest, but the other was different. It was hard to be sunnily natural when Renee had callers, and so I was sometimes silent, raging at myself inwardly the while for being a jealous fool

where absolutely no excuse for jealousy existed. For, I assured my idiot self savagely, never by the slightest sign had she given me reason to aspire to anything more than her frank friendship. Therefore, why,—but bah! I was a fool.

The latter fact I felt shamedly that Dorothy divined also at times, with that diabolical feminine intuition that seems especially rampant in sisters and is so disconcerting to a jealous man. Sometimes when I sat silent while the rest were chattering merrily, Dorothy would look away from her cavalier for a moment, her eyes flashing swiftly toward Renee's, whoever he might happen to be on that particular evening. Then those eyes, in which rioted little dancing devils of soft malice, would, veiled in mock concern, seek my own.

"What's the matter, Gillie?" she would inquire, with what I could swear was an undue emphasis upon the odious pseudonym, "you're not talking. That is unusual. Aren't you well?"

"Perfectly," I would probably assure her, with a covert, impotent glare. "I am simply tired."

Perhaps she would turn to John, sprawled in a great chair near the fire, smoking steadily, rarely speaking unless he had something to say, which was unlike the rest of us. "Captain Godfrey," the minx would admonish severely, "look after Gillie more closely. Don't let him overdo. He was delicate when a child." And with a last malicious smile the little tormentor would leave me to my ruffled self, my palms itching to box her ears.

There was one young subaltern of the regular infantry whom I hated many shades more than his fellows. Lieutenant Henry Whiting, a dashing young fellow with a curly red poll and ambitious

moustache to match, fairly rushed in where I had feared to tread. In deadly earnest he was; determined to carry the citadel by storm. It was his way; action, ardor and ambition were met in his ensanguined hair. Often he came and then oftener, and always monopolized her conversation. The words of his mouth flowed as rivers to the sea and she listened and laughed and was diverted, while I fumed and longed passionately for some excuse to pummel him. He was of engaging personality, of fine antecedents and prospects; young, ardent and palpably enamored; an excellent parti. Her manner, too; was there not something in it toward him with which I had never been favored? Yet again, when neither he nor the others chanced to be there, and she set to entertain me in her pretty, vivacious fashion, while perhaps John and Dorothy played at cards in one corner of the great living room and M. De Montefort and my father talked of the momentous issues of the period in another, then hope would throb again and I would tell myself that perhaps after all she cared no more for Whiting or any of the rest than for me, and that at the least my chance was as good as his or theirs. So the time passed while I alternated between wretchedness and content, betwixt elation and discouragement, for after all there are briers and brambles even in Arcady.

And sometimes, of a blustering night, the big brass knocker would resound with two dignified detonations, and, on the opening of the portal, in would waddle the plump Noadiah, his broad face red as the jackets of the enemy of two wars gallantly fought by him, a hilarious, irreverent zephyr following in malice and clutching at his coat tails. And the veteran would sit and discourse of the

stirring Revolutionary days through which he served as a stripling, of the dark time at Valley Forge, of the inspiring denouement at Yorktown, for he had been with Washington. And we listened appreciatively, for Noadiah was an entertaining if somewhat ponderous reconteur.

Ordinarily it was that these tales fell from the lips of Noadiah, when he chanced to call, but not always. For sometimes the Widow Hankinson was there, she whom Noadiah had emphatically declared to me, on a certain broken Sabbath, to be a woman, and which assertion I had not disputed. And at these times the eloquence of Noadiah was concentrated in his bulging eyes, but these spoke volumes, while those of the buxom widow dropped modestly floorward with unforgotten coyness. And the lips of Noadiah were mute and dumb, save at intervals when there issued from them, in gusty volume, the wordless tribute of prodigious sighs.

And on other evenings, but never by awkward chance when Noadiah was present, there would sound on the knocker three sharp, nervous raps, like drum taps, and in would be ushered the withered Cyrenus, with odd nods, peering swiftly here and there like a ferret. The wrinkled face was now bare of sparse, gray whisker, for Cyenus shaved religiously in these days. There was a great change perceptible in the little man since the day of his enlistment. With that memorable step had returned, with odd swiftness, a virile self respect, latent for years, but revived under the sharp sting of awakened pride and the responsibilities entailed by his resumption of an old grim trade he loved and which he so well understood. The little man was most valuable to us. There was not a man at the Harbor

so thorough in the drilling of the raw militia, and he was a strict disciplinarian. I had noted from the very first that his dissoluteness of the former time had fled. That he had his nips regularly in secret I did not doubt, but he was never unduly under the influence of liquor and never indulged in the presence of his men. Moreover, old acquired colloquialisms, the result of idle, dissolute years in a new, raw country, were dropping from his speech like rough, outworn garments. His enunciation at times was now nearly as pure as our own. Whatever his past, we were certain that his estate had been considerably higher than the one in which the outbreak of the war had found him.

There was a mystery about him which was impenetrable, a strange, tantalizing something that stimulated a curiosity that remained unsatisfied. On one occasion, indeed, the spirit had moved him to recount a vivid narrative of stirring experiences that partially removed the veil. We learned then that he had been born in New England, of old Puritan stock, and had, like Noadiah, fought through the Revolution. At the close of that struggle he had crossed the ocean to England, and, evidently from the pure love of fighting for fighting's own sweet sake, he had fought with Englishmen in some of the tight little island's omnipresent wars. "I'd as soon fight under any flag as my own, for the simple love of the game," he had concluded, "but when any other flag heads a column a-marching against my own——" he paused with an expressive gesture, "why, you see in whose camp I am to-night."

"Yes, and doing yeoman's service!" exclaimed John warmly, and shook the little man's hand.

I have told of the raps of Noadiah and Cyrenus upon the knocker, raps that proclaimed individuality. And there was another, equally unmistakable, and it was like a knell.

The lamentations of Jeremiah were as psalms of hope by comparison with the dirges of Abner Holcomb. Some day he would die. The ghost of rheumatism would not be exorcised. He had a misery in his tubes, he could hear 'em a-whistlin' or sump'n when he breathed. If the rheumatism didn't fetch him, they would. An' Betsey, he was worryin' about Betsey an' the farm. He felt sartin that her hired man was shiftless and of no account. The war was wearin' on him, wearin' on all of us. Mout as well gin in, the Britishers would have us in the end. What was the use of anything?

All this in a voice like the whimper of the north wind in the pines of a lonely graveyard, while someone shivered and thrust more wood in the fireplace. Abner's solemn eyes stared like the yawning gateways of twin tombs; depression brooded in his discouraged whiskers; his masticating jaws moved eternally with the slow, sombre iteration of footfalls in a funeral cortege to the strains of a dead march; his face——

But why continue? Life is short even as the face of Abner was long.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BRAND OF THE BRAVO

Spring, like dew, again fell upon the land. Dead things were quickened, bursting into bloom. The grass, redolent with sweet savor, grew in green fragrance, glad, luxuriant. Bare boughs blossomed, giving forth their increase. The desolate forest, yesterday a shrouded dirge, became to-day a living bower of beauty. The frogs grumbled placidly, croaking in the marshes. Renee's robin left off moping, swaggered like a bravo and fell to grubbing.

There was a stir at the Harbor, an electric quality in the air which promised action after a long, encrusting rest. The little army, emerging like a bear from its cave after a winter of hibernation, stretched its claws and yawned hungrily. It was the beginning of a campaign which the rank and file hoped to make glorious; hoped to render Ontario and the frontier immortal. There was a cheerful bustle; the constant arrival of small reinforcements; ceaseless drilling, the acquiring of new stores and equipments; the ring of hammers in the ship yards. There was keen expectancy; the anticipation of great, round deeds; of swelling achievement.

April the twenty-second some two thousand troops, under the immediate charge of General Zebulon M. Pike, were embarked on the fleet of

Commodore Chauncey, John's company and mine being among them. For three days we remained moored in the Harbor. Finally the ships weighed anchor, and, headed by the Oneida, Chauncey's flagship, with their great, white sails bellying in the strong breeze, moved from their moorings.

From the deck of the Oneida I gazed back at the town. We rounded the long, low point that penned the harbor, sweeping about it into the tumbling whitecaps of the bay, whipped into tips of crested foam by the wind. The sky, like an inverted blue bowl, was cloudless. The golden glow of an unshadowed sun limned the lake with glory.

The surf sounded in our rear, beating against the great wall of limestone that for nearly a mile stretched its gray, sheer length before the town, a natural rampart, at the verge of which the cannon frowned, their muzzles pointing across the miles that led to Frontenac. The bluff was thronged, and with the cheers there blended the crashing blare of bands. I searched the crowd on the cliff with wistful eyes that were rewarded. She stood there with Dorothy, a slim hand of each waving a white wisp of a handkerchief. I swung my hat in reply, and John, who stood by me, doffed the nondescript felt affair he wore and stared with me at the receding shore until the inevitable pipe had gone out. Anathematizing it softly, he relighted it.

"Whither are we bound, Gilbert?" he asked, puffing pale blue clouds that whisked in the wind. He had but just boarded the fleet before we sailed, having returned only the night previous from the execution of a commission at Ogdensburgh.

"My boy," I answered, reluctantly removing my gaze from the lessening figures on the cliff, "great

secrecy hath been observed. Not more than a handful of men aboard the fleet know where it is taking them. I am one of the handful. Sing psalms, John, for it's York, naught else but Little York.

"Now is the winter of our discontent——" psalmed John, but I silenced him with a brandished handspike.

"I can hardly credit it," he commented soberly, "that there is actually a probability of action. If I dream, Gilbert, do not wake me."

"Not I," I answered, "and heaven help the man who should. You would be ill natured."

"True, I should," he replied, thumbing his pipe bowl. "As it is, the project gives me a peaceful anticipation. I long to exercise my muscles and my lungs, for I shall probably yell a little."

"You will likely need to do both," I responded. "I am a little afraid of our militia. Good fellows, all, but unused to this business and rather raw. We should tie them to us."

"When the time comes," returned John, "I think we shall find that the knots of loyalty will hold." We relapsed into silence, gazing out upon the sunlit water, diademed with spray. The staunch new timbers creaked; the wind droned through the rigging; the great sails bellied in the breeze. We drove to the west in the rush of a strong head wind. In the wake of the Oneida there followed the Madison, Hamilton, Conquest, Governor Tompkins and eight other brigs and armed schooners, sliding with the surges, the water breaking in miniature cascades from the advancing bows on either side.

The movement was in accordance with a plan of operations against Canada, which had been

formulated in the cabinet at Washington that winter. General Dearborn had been acquainted with it in February. He was directed to assemble large forces at Sackets Harbor and Buffalo. The force at the Harbor was designed to be landed at Frontenac, and, after securing that town and the shipping in the harbor, was to proceed to Little York and seize the stores collected there and some British frigates in course of building. General Brown had orders to have a large force of militia in reserve. Later in the spring the prudential policy of the government—perhaps this time fortunately—deferred temporarily the attack on Frontenac and substituted instead that upon Little York, at the head of the lake. Could that post be taken, it would give us the command of Ontario and our troops could advance to attack Fort George by land and water, while the troops at Buffalo could cross over and carry Forts Erie and Chippewa and join the army at Fort George. From there the combined forces might concentrate on Frontenac, for such now was the varying program. So to this end the troops, under General Pike, had been embarked on Chauncey's fleet, as I have recorded, the whole being directed by Dearborn.

On we rushed, past the wooded headlands that girt Henderson Harbor; by the wind-swept sand dunes that marked, a few miles further west, the confines of the great Mexico Bay. The wind rose, whining through the cordage; the ships were lifted on the breasts of great, rolling swells. The wind was with us, driving us in a cloud of spray on toward Little York. Wooded islands lay, dark and sullen, to the north. We neared them, hearing the morose growl of the surf upon their beaches.

The hours passed, the men upon the decks busy with grim preparations. Could human effort compass it, there would be a great, round deed whose sequence should not spell a cipher. The wind rose mightily, its tug fairly lifting the boats from the water. The canvas stretched taut, blown stiffly inward, tight as a drumhead. Dusk fell and the night came on, the wind dying gradually. Still we sailed on, like dim ghosts in the dark. The dawn came with a freshening wind and we rushed on, renewed, to the west.

And so on, while the hours dragged like years. Now all eyes were strained for the town, and at last, the third day out, there rose a yell from the deck of the Oneida that was echoed from the other boats of the fleet. Little York was close at hand. In a few moments we were sweeping by it. There was no delay. Seamen sprang to their places to slacken sail and prepare to lay to for the landing, which was to be by small boats at an open field just beyond the town.

Scores of men sprang to the boats, dropping over the sides of the ships like ants. Hundreds tumbled into the batteaux, tossing like corks upon the swells. In a breath of time the long line of boats from the thirteen ships were pulling steadily toward the shore through the rolling sea that hissed and boiled under the lash of the wind, which carried them far below their intended stopping place, toward a stretch of dense woodland. The ships, meanwhile prepared to cover our approach with a wholesale shelling of the enemy's shores.

Major Forsyth, with his rifle corps, first approached the beach. John and I, with our com-

mands, were in batteaux immediately behind him. Suddenly there came a volley from the woods, now close at hand. The water spattered in jets about us. An oath from John caused me to turn my head. Only the stem of his pipe remained between his teeth. The bowl was gone. I laughed, a trifle nervously.

Major Forsyth gave an order. The men ceased rowing, our own following suit. A moment later and the echoes rolled back from our return fire, poured into the woods. We resumed rowing, rapidly approaching the shore. A moment later a boat passed us, the oarsmen pulling like mad. General Pike sat in the stern, his eyes burning, his face aglow with the lust to land.

His was the first boat to reach the shore, the others putting pell-mell after him. As the boat grounded he leaped into the water, splashing to the wooded bank, his men following. There was a hat swung in air, the glimpse of an ensanguined poll. I noted Lieutenant Whiting with a grudging tribute to his quality. He was certainly eager enough. Forming quickly, with the fire of the unseen enemy pouring down upon us, we scaled the bank with Yankee yells, Pike at the head. The enemy had been lurking in the woods. He ran, we after him.

Forsyth landed some distance above. At this instant his bugles sounded and we heard the crackle of musketry. As we rushed on, loud yells of fear sounded nearby and there rushed past as on the wind's wings a scurrying cloud of savages, unreliable British allies. Also some militia uniforms gleamed ahead. We hurried on in pursuit.

John and I ran through the forest, our men, who merited more trust than I had reposed in them, at our heels. Close to me trotted Cyrenus, agile, tireless as a terrier. Near John, the portly Noadiah floundered like a fleshy bull, eyes protruding, fat face the color of the enemy, strangling gasps in his throat. But he kept on, while Cyrenus grinned as he trotted. Abner Holcomb was at my heels, his old musket over his bony shoulder, striding unbelievable strides as though he had seven league boots, a funereal expression without animation upon his face. He looked the same as when in church with Betsey in the brief interval before sleep claimed him at each successive service.

From the lake there came the thunder of Chauncey's cannonade and we knew that the remainder of the troops, under its cover, were landing in the woods now deserted by the enemy, and would speedily follow us.

When the last of the flying enemy had halted in the friendly forest shade we stopped also. Waiting for the rest of the troops to come up, we re-formed to pass in sections through the woods. Some field-pieces and a howitzer were hauled up, with infinite difficulty, to protect the head of the column. The Fifteenth Regiment of regulars joined us, taking the lead, which imparted more encouragement to the militiamen. We now pushed on in the direction of the fort.

The enemy gave us an arduous time in doing it, though not by opposing arms. We encountered a couple of streams over which they had, with solicitous forethought, removed the bridges. At last we came into a clearing, the fort lying just beyond it. The men burst into cheers.

In this clearing, confronting us, gaped the muzzles of a battery of twenty-four-pounders, unlimbered for our reception. Captain Walworth, of the Sixteenth regulars, to which Lieutenant Whiting belonged, was ordered to storm this battery. The men rushed across the intervening space with fixed bayonets, John's troops and mine following, and the sight was all that was needed. The gunners, who evidently regarded cold steel with aversion, delivered one badly aimed volley and fled. We were in peaceful possession of the swiftly silenced battery. Lieutenant Whiting had been in the front. I could not help but admire the fellow.

The militia halted there to hold the position while the regulars swept on, and, with ridiculous ease, soon occupied the works and silenced the remaining batteries. The enemy had displayed a feather of virginal whiteness.

John leaned against one of the impotent guns. "Hell!" he commented savagely.

"On the contrary," I observed placidly, "it is heavenly. They turn the other cheek."

"To think that Englishmen should run like women!" he claimed. "It shames my blood!"

"Most who ran," I observed gently, "are raw Canadian militiamen. And many, too, were cursed redskins, British only by the grace of godless emissaries. What did you expect?"

"Fighting!" he growled. "I have had a foot race!" The broken pipe stem, still clenched between his teeth, tilted aggressively. I reached up, removing it.

"Have another, John, a whole one," I suggested soothingly, and handed him my own, together with

my tobacco pouch. Nicotine, like the witch she is, presently soothed his spirit.

Cyrenus trotted about us, snuffing tentatively, darting uneasy glances here and there, like a ferret. Nearby stood Noadiah, a man apart, still blowing like a foundered horse. Holcomb masticated tobacco in deep melancholy.

"Do we loot?" asked Cyrenus, addressing either or both of us.

"Loot? Well, no!" replied John, staring at him. "And don't you let me catch you at it!"

"Well, I didn't know," returned Cyrenus, in an injured way. "I need some new things."

"You go to the devil!" said John. And Cyrenus went, for a moment afterward we saw him stealthily uncorking a treasured flask. It was excusable; the occasion demanded recognition of some kind. Far from reproaching him, we sampled his store and found it good.

"There is some things," commented Abner, the last served, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand, "what rekerncile me to livin' away from Betsey." And he cast a compassionate glance toward Noadiah, who, the bottle being Cyrenus', had not imbibed.

General Pike stood nearby, talking with some officers. Ere long he ceased in order to minister to the needs of a wounded British sergeant who was discovered near the group. From time to time he glanced toward the town, whose surrender was momentarily expected. The troops were again preparing to form, ready to march into it. Suddenly John grasped my arm. "Look there!" he exclaimed, pointing.

There stood, some little distance in front of us,

a square, substantial building, evidently an adjunct to the fort. Toward it there was creeping upon his belly, through a low thicket, the figure of a man worming along like a snake. He had evidently emerged from the fringe of the adjoining forest.

He made his way swiftly to the rear of the building, then partially rose. His garb was of a nondescript type. But the face, mottled and wicked to look upon; the red hair and bushy beard; the yellow eyes like a cat's; the burly figure! Red Rolfe in the evil flesh, stealing on like a thief. For what sinister purpose?

He had not seen us. His savages, undoubtedly those who had rushed by us through the forest, where were they?

All the hate of the world surged through me. I lifted my rifle to my shoulder. John struck it down.

"Not that, Gilbert, not that!" he muttered, his voice strange in my ears.

I stared into his white face. "He is a devil, John," I answered fiercely. "Let me send him home!"

He only shook his head, his face shadowed. The man ahead, moving forward cautiously, had gained a point some distance behind the building. He now stood again erect, facing us. There was a burning, hissing object in his hand.

John sprang forward with a cry, his rifle coming to his shoulder. "Drop it!" he shouted, "or you die!"

The bravo turned, his face like a fiend's. "Be damned to you!" he roared, in that strange voice that rolled in rich melody out of his unclean throat.

The flaming brand flew through the air, straight into the building.

There was a roar like the mingling of many thunders; a blinding flash that seared the eyes, leaving darkness and silence. After a while my eyes opened. On all sides awful groans of agony were sounding.

I struggled to a sitting posture, bewildered eyes searching the chaos about me. The pitiful outcries of wounded men came to me; the ground was strewn with blackened corpses. There was the odor or burned flesh; a horrible mingling of gruesome sights and sounds. I was aware of arms supporting me. I looked up. John's face was bending over me, sombre as the tomb.

I struggled weakly to my feet. "John, what does this mean?" I cried wildly, my head reeling.

"The powder magazine was blown up, he answered dully. "Many are killed."

I glanced to the left. A squad of soldiers were carrying away an officer. The blood was dripping from the litter. I marked his face with a cry.

"General Pike!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, he is dying," rejoined John, still in that odd tone.

"Ah, that devil!" I burst out, dry sobs tearing my throat. "Curse him! Why did you not let me kill him!"

John turned to me, his face convulsed. "Gilbert," he exclaimed harshly, "I wish I had! I wish I had! Could I but have had a second more, I would have killed him myself! Better twenty such fratricides than this!" And he buried his face in his hands.

I stared at him, horror in my eyes. "John!" I

gasped, "you do not mean, you cannot mean that he is——"

He stood upright, his eyes, full of sombre rage, fixed on the blackened ruin of the powder magazine, from which poured dense clouds of smoke, mingled with the writhing of tongues of shooting flame.

"Gilbert," he said, "I pray God that he no longer is, but was my brother!"

CHAPTER XXIV

A LEAF FROM THE PAST

I had lain inert but for a moment in that infernal chaos of death. I removed my gaze from John's face, trying to realize the grisly meaning of what he had told me. It was incomprehensible; it stunned me.

At that moment there sounded in our ears the rattling strains of "Yankee Doodle." Close by stood the regimental band, playing as coolly as if on dress parade. There were deep throated cheers; the torn column closed up. John and I, with a mutual awakening to duty, moved up with them, our men following us.

In advance, with our rifles at shoulder, for despite our rank we carried them as indispensable adjuncts to our method of warfare,—both of us being excellent shots,—we proceeded. The scene was indescribably gruesome. We slipped in pools of blood, stepped across the shattered fragments of rent humanity that had been comrades. Groans from the wounded sounded on all sides; voices shrieked aloud for death to end agony. In that roar of desolation nearly three hundred of our own men and the enemy's forces had been killed and wounded. We who had seen could but hope that the fiend who created the havoc lay dead in the ruin he had wrought.

At the moment of the explosion General Pike was sitting on a stump, whither some men had carried the wounded English sergeant to whom he was ministering. As the thunderous discharge sounded, blowing five hundred barrels of powder and a great quantity of stone, together with the fragments of the building into the air, the general was bending over the prisoner, examining his wounds. They drew the commander out from under a pile of debris. Turning to Captain Nicholson, who bent over him, he exclaimed, "I am mortally wounded." They procured a litter and carried him from the field.

While the strains of the rollicking "Yankee Doodle" filled the air, our column speedily reformed and we started grimly for the town. Had but one man been left alive to reach it, he would have finally fallen riddled in the breast, for not a man showed his back to the enemy that day. But even as we swept on, murderously silent, our eyes caught the glimpse of a fluttering flag far ahead, where the advance guard had preceded us. It sank gradually from sight. A moment later and another banner rose in its place, waving in the wind. We stopped, swinging our caps in the air, shrieking mad cheers.

Far back, General Pike, who was being borne from the field, heard the tumult and turned his head toward an attending sergeant in mute inquiry. "The union jack is down and the Stars and Stripes are up!" cried the man, in an excess of joy. And the dying hero, racked with agony, smiled.

He was borne tenderly to the Oneida. He could not speak, but lay with glad eyes, gasping out his life. They brought the captured union jack on

board. He motioned feebly for the trophy and they folded it, placing it under his head. Then, while the uneasy fingers picked at the coverlet, he died.

So passed a hero, whose record shines with as white a lustre as the glory of the snow-crowned peak in Colorado, the wonder of a continent, which he discovered and which was christened for him. Of sturdy liberty-loving stock he was, son of an illustrious patriot of the Revolution, who survived his boy but was too old to serve in this second war against the mistress of the seas. In a letter to his venerable parent, written the day before this expedition, the martyred patriot had said:

"Should I be the happy mortal destined to turn the scale of war, will you not rejoice, O, my father? May heaven be propitious and smile on the cause of my country! But if we are destined to fall, may my fall be like Wolfe's, to sleep in the arms of victory."

With the removal of General Pike to the Oneida, Colonel Pearce, on whom the command devolved, took possession of the barracks, then advanced to the town. On the way he was met by the officers of the Canadian militia, who proposed a capitulation. This was agreed to, shortsightedly, as it proved, for we learned later that it was brought about to allow General Sheaffe, with the British regulars, to escape to their vessels and also to destroy the stores. The plans of the enemy were eminently successful. The regulars made good their retreat and several vessels were burned, as were also large quantities of military and naval stores that we had hoped to acquire.

And still, be it forever told to the credit of our

men, despite the exasperation caused by the loss of life in the explosion of the magazine and the flight of the regulars and destruction of stores that we had expected to confiscate, the citizens were treated with a consideration that caused them blank amazement. Such had been the strict orders of General Pike, and they were carried out after his death, though there was indeed slight disposition to disobey them.

A few days after our occupancy of Little York the troops were re-embarked to proceed immediately to Niagara. It had been intended to do this sooner, but a week's delay was caused by bad weather, rendering sailing dangerous. Other vexatious circumstances served to further delay the embarkation. During this time, some schooners, doing duty as troop ships, brought us reinforcements from Sackets Harbor and Buffalo. At length Dearborn, with five thousand men, sailed for Fort George. He resolved to make the landing upon the peninsula, on which the fortress was situated, in six divisions, under cover of the fire of the fleet. The first division, of five hundred men, was commanded by Colonel Winfield Scott, who volunteered for the service, followed by Colonel Porter with a reserve. The gallant Perry offered to superintend the landing of the boats, which would have to be effected under a galling fire and through a roaring surf. The world knows of the result of that fearless sortie, one of the few bright spots upon our page of the ledger of those two disappointing years. History has writ of the reckless, brilliant charge of the intrepid Scott, an invulnerable Achilles; of how Dearborn, watching the fierce assault from the deck of the Oneida, burst into tears as he saw the giant

form of the dashing leader, whom the gods loved too well to destroy, tumble backward down the ramparts that his men were storming. Dearborn cried out that he was killed, but the hero, up in a flash, led the way over the battlements unharmed, routing the enemy, and, leaping upon a horse, headed his column in the pursuit after the redcoats, who fled like chaff before him. If the country was cursed with Hulls, she still had her Scotts, her Pikes and Browns.

These attacks upon the forts of Niagara, however, were not participated in by John and me. With our commands we had returned unexpectedly to the Harbor, opportunely, to be sure. After the arrival of the schooners that had brought the reinforcements, General Dearborn became torn with misgivings, for he remembered Frontenac. Might not Provost and Yeo take advantage of the splendid opportunity afforded of falling upon the Harbor while the defenders were nearly all away? The reinforcements that had arrived from the post consisted mainly of regulars. Only a handful had been left there and the militia constituted the only reserve that could be but indifferently depended upon, for they had fought scarcely at all. There were stores at the Harbor in plenty and new brigs in the process of building; in fact, a pretty tidbit for the enemy, should his teeth fancy it. Obviously he should be forestalled. Obviously also, some troops should be returned to the well nigh deserted post. The upshot was that several companies of the best trained militia, with which category John's command and my own were honored by inclusion with a small reinforcing detachment

of regulars, were loaded upon some lightly armed schooners and returned forthwith to the Harbor.

So it happened that upon a day in the second week in May I stood upon the deck of the Julia, quietly smoking and gazing down at the blue-green water which slipped rapidly by under us. We moved with swiftness by the grace of a favoring wind. The lowering skies and passion-torn waters of the past few days were gone like evil dreams. The fresh breath of the mild May morning bestowed its benison; the few clouds that loafed lazily in the blue of the smiling sky gleamed white as the sails below in the sunshine. Not a craft was in sight other than our own. The rippling green field, powdered with tiny foam patches, stretched east and west; undulating, uneasy, endless. Afar in the lake islands loomed low and blue on the clear horizon, a shade deeper than the sky. To the south gleamed the golden, drifting sand dunes of Mexico Bay, on the long beach of which we could hear distantly the lapping of the waves, throbbing in their eternal monotone. Beyond, now but a breath away, loomed the stretch of forest that followed the shore line to the western confines of Henderson Harbor.

Lieutenant Whiting, who was in charge of the detachment of regulars returning with us, approached me. He held his hat in his hand, the sunlight rioting in his curly red hair. He looked somewhat troubled and his eyes were haggard. I strove to be cordial. After all, his gallantry was undeniable.

"A terrible affair, Captain, that explosion at Little York," said he.

"It was," I assented, somewhat brusquely, in

spite of myself. He looked at me curiously, comprehensively.

"There is no need, Captain, for further rivalry between us," he remarked dryly, with a bitter smile.

"Sir, what do you mean? Explain yourself!" I demanded, when I had regained my breath.

"When men are interested in the same woman," he responded, with a certain dignity, "each may unerringly pick his rivals. One may know even if the other be unassertive and dumb. It is an instinct."

"True," I muttered, reflecting that I had picked him as one upon the evening of his introduction to her, though in him was no lack of assertion. "But to what purpose is the homily?"

"Simply that I am no longer a rival," he answered. "I am more candid than most. You may consider me bizarre. But I thought you might be interested to know that Mademoiselle De Montefort, just before we sailed, gave me my congé. I could have expected no more," he added, with a mirthless smile. "She was merely my friend, and the episode to which I have referred, for which my impetuosity was responsible, troubled her. And now, Warburton," extending his hand, "I wish you better luck."

I shook his hand warmly. I liked him, this gallant young fellow, whose keen eye, because turned in the same quarter, had divined my secret. I wished him well—elsewhere, for we are but human. He walked away.

The wind in the rigging was blithe, the sun smiled more widely and there was exhilaration in the rush of the boat, like a live thing, through the

surges. I smoked steadily and saw rosy visions in the wavering blue clouds. I was sorry for Whiting, whom I could now appreciate. I doubtless invested him, in my sudden glow of gratitude, with even more virtues than he possessed.

There was a step near me, a great form hung over the rail at my side. John smoked silently, gazing at the glory of the perfect day with abstracted eyes. Since the terrible explosion of the magazine, when he had in a measure revealed the identity of the fiend who had wrought the havoc, he had not spoken further of the matter. Needless to say, I had respected his silence.

Suddenly he spoke, still gazing over at the long, green swells. "I wonder if he is dead," he muttered.

There was no need to ask whom he meant. I knew.

"I do not see how he could have escaped," I observed. "Men died who were thrice as far away."

"True," he replied bitterly, "but the devil protects his own, Gilbert," he suddenly exclaimed, "I am going to tell you of myself, more than any living man in the country yonder," pointing to the southward, "knows of John Godfrey. I need not ask you to regard the confidence as sacred." I bowed.

He bent his black eyes, that were so incongruous in the face of an Englishman, upon me.

"John Godfrey is but a creature of circumstance," he said. "A man may be born again. You understand. Well, I found it convenient to be born again, as I fully believed then, to be enabled to live out my life to its allotted span."

This much I had gathered from the beginning. The scene between Red Rolfe and my friend at their encounter in the forest enlightened me.

"My father is an Englishman, and, in fact, is in the king's service," continued John. "As for me, I have drunk in liberty in the air of this country. While my parent's resources are ample, he has preferred from the beginning an active military career. My mother was a Frenchwoman. She died when I was too young to remember." His eyes and swarthy skin, together with certain characteristics, were explained to me. He continued.

"My father, in his youth, was a fool. Like the majority, of course, but his foolishness took a more serious form than it does with most, for that fiend whom we both hope dead yonder is or was my father's natural son. You have noted that voice of his. It is an inheritance. His mother was a London concert hall singer, famed equally for a wonderful contralto, a rich animal beauty and general deviltry." Disgust contorted his face.

I grasped his hand impulsively. "Your half-brother!" I exclaimed. "I knew you could not have had the same mother."

"Thanks," he rejoined, smiling grimly. "I am myself a believer in the preponderating maternal influence upon offspring. My brother," with indescribable sarcasm, "has all the characteristics which distinguished his mother, save in physical attractions, and not one of the traits that assist in the needed redemption of his father.

"The miserable intrigue," he continued, "occurred in France, where the family was temporarily living. My father brought his mistress from London to

Paris, spent most of his time there. The gentleman whom you know as Red Rolfe was the charming outcome of that association. Through mischance, the whole affair came to the knowledge of my mother, though her husband had naturally tried to conceal the shameful course he had been pursuing by various subterfuges. She was in delicate health and the shock killed her. When she was dead the mother of my brother, deeply enamored of my father, aspired to her place. My father was mad with grief, a privilege of sinners, though so often unavailing. He turned the creature harshly away. She loved him in her bestial way, and that night she served God and mankind in general by poisoning herself.

"My father, like most fools, possessed a certain belated conscientiousness, and, inasmuch as the living infant was his folly, he conceived it to be his duty to educate him. We were brought up together," with a shrug. "We went to school together, afterward entering college in company. I was rather wild; it was in my blood I suppose. I made no special effort to conceal it and fell in my father's good graces. He, since the nauseating result of his own wrongdoing, had become a Puritan personified. The wretch, who should be dead, but probably is not, was ten times worse than I, but he was crafty and concealed it. It seems incredible now, but his ugly face used to be as smug as a preacher's.

"When we had done with college we went home to my father's manor. It was my intention to enter the military service. My father was home on leave from wounds received in foreign service. My

brother and I always hated each other. I despised him and he knew it. I did not, however, know of his true origin till long afterward.

"Things went from bad to worse. I had been reckless, to the disapproval of my father, and his attitude toward me did not help matters. Moreover, friend Rolfe wore the mask in those days, Gilbert, and he most effectually cozened my father and fostered his animosity toward me. I have never to this day been able to clearly understand how my parent, who is a man of superior intelligence, could have permitted himself to have been so gulled. As for me, I scorned to say anything in my own defence or to expose the real character of my brother, who knew I would not, and presumed upon the fact. My father had eyes, I reasoned. If they could not see what to me was so transparent, I was too disgusted to enlighten them.

"One morning my father missed a large sum of money. Some of the servants were suspected, when, while we were in the library with my father, my brother suddenly turned on me and accused me of the theft. I denied it with an oath. He led the way to my room, Gilbert, and took the money from my wardrobe, while my father looked on in dismay. You can readily grasp the scheme. It seemed so childishly transparent to me that I turned to my father with a laugh, thinking that now the veil must be rent from his eyes. I looked at him, and in the glance I read unquestioning belief in my guilt in his face.

"I think the devil then got into me. I could never remember clearly what happened, but I fully believed when my senses returned to me that Rolfe was dead. I believed it for years afterward.

"I escaped from the house, tearing away from those who tried to hold me. I made my way to Liverpool, eluding pursuit, and was lucky enough to get aboard a ship sailing for the States. I have been here since. I have imbibed the spirit of your land, the spirit as I believe of broadest liberty, in the free air of your forests. That is why I bear arms with you to-day. I accidentally learned of my brother's true origin years ago in Canada.

"For years I thought myself a fratricide. I was trapping far up in the wilds of Canada on one occasion, some years ago, when I heard screams of agony hard by. I hurried to the spot with my hound and found my precious brother and some of his redskins torturing the poor old miser you met, in the hope of securing his funds. He was as you see him now, Gilbert, the smug mask gone forever. His inevitable blood had shown. My father had found him out and cast him forth some time previously. Well, as you know, I broke up that little meeting and helped the old fool of a miser to a safer locality. I had heard of Red Rolfe, now I knew who he was."

I nodded, warm with comfortable memories of the miser's graphic tale; gloating mentally over a conjured vision of evil eyes shut tight as a newborn kitten's, of a wicked face battered to a pulp with righteous blows.

"My brother's real name is Geoffrey, while mine in Gerald," John told me, looking at me oddly, "but I am John Godfrey to you and others till the end. I have done with the old name. As for my father, unless he be at Montreal, I suppose he is even now in Frontenac."

"Perhaps I have met him," I exclaimed.

"No," he replied quietly, "but you have heard his name a thousand times this past winter. Renee is never tired of talking about him."

I started. "You mean——" I began.

He smiled. "That he is Renee's good angel, her friend in need, Major Basil Aberdeen," he supplied.

CHAPTER XXV

THE WOE FROM FRONTENAC

"Woe!" shrilled the crone, a shriveled claw extended, a lurid madness in the bleared eyes. "What did I tell ye, merry gentlemen, long months gone?" She chuckled. "The woe from Frontenac! Red woe, red blood, all red—red!" Her cracked crackle sounded horribly inhuman.

"You have had a bad nightmare, Mother Corp," said John. "Indeed, you have it yet. What is your disturbing dream?"

We were on the bluff, John and I, enjoying the fresh morning air. The old vagrant stood before us, gray locks wildly straggling, withered features working strangely, red cloak flapping in the breeze; a realization, in the unlovely flesh, of one of Macbeth's witches.

"Dream!" she cried. "If I dream, merry gentlemen, look yonder and dream too!" And she pointed down the bay. We turned our eyes in that direction, the crone mumbling crazily to herself, watching us with malicious eyes.

The calm of the fair May morning was broken. The boom of a single gun rumbled in the bay, followed by echoing alarms. Everywhere men sprang up electrified, gazing out upon the wide water. Far away a little schooner was flying under full sail toward the town. As we gazed, there came a puff

of white smoke and the roar of a second detonation sounded from the alarm gun upon her deck.

Others of the town's defenders, together with women and children, all wildly excited, came rushing from the huddle of houses to the plateau, watching the approach of the little Lady of the Lake with painful anxiety. With a single impulse, as the rushing schooner rapidly neared the harbor, with signal gun still bellowing at intervals, the throng, agitated like a field of grain in the sweep of a mighty wind, hurried with disconnected queries and strange fears to the shipyards.

The Lady of the Lake glided into the harbor, and, tacking, came swiftly to the docks. "Send expresses and alarm the country!" shouted her commander from the deck. "Yeo's fleet is coming!"

It was enough. For days the Lady had been cruising about with feminine inquisitiveness, her crew scanning the horizon for the sail that all feared would come from Frontenac. It had been three days since the returning schooners had providentially brought the reserve from Niagara to the Harbor. We had arrived to find the people keyed up to high excitement and dread. They welcomed our return with relief, for with the total force that could even now be mustered, it was but a forlorn defense that the hamlet could offer. And now, as had been justly feared Sir George Provost, maddened by the successful sortie against Little York, had come to take revenge. Menace, a few miles out, lay cradled on the face of the deep.

In our shipyards, still upon the ways, rested formidable brigs that were unfinished. These, undoubtedly, were to be burned. Filled storehouses

were to be rifled. It was a pretty plan, and a defending force far inferior to Provost's at Little York, both in numbers and in military experience, intervened between the end and its accomplishment.

Now to strained eyes, aching with tortured suspense, gazing outward from the long, salient bluff, appeared the ships, still quite small on the horizon, white dots that studded the lake out by the shadowed bulk of Stony Island. They were approaching leisurely.

In the meantime, hurried haste marked preparations in the village. Colonel Backus, who was in charge, despatched mounted expresses to all the adjacent settlements to summon the available militia. One he sent galloping to the home of General Brown, eight miles distant. The general, at the close of his six months' term some time previously, had retired to his farm, in deep disgust at the dilatory policy of the government and the timorous inefficiency of certain military weaklings who commanded its armies. With the approach of the peril, however, the great heart and soul of him blazed with the ardor of that chivalry which ultimately secured for him the tardy recognition which resulted, ere his death, in giving him the supreme command of the armies of the nation.

No sooner did he hear of the danger than he sprang upon his horse, riding like mad for the Harbor. Soon the thundering hoofbeats of the powerful animal he bestrode sounded in the village street. The poor brute staggered as the general swung to the ground. The qivering flanks dripped with sweat; patches of foam fell, mingling with the gray dust of the roadway.

With the arrival of the intrepid chief, confidence, which had flickered, revived, again burning bravely. With the grasp that marks the born leader, the general set about making his preparations and giving directions as coolly as if inspecting an ordinary drill. And all through the day detachments of militia poured in, some afoot, grimy with dust, others bouncing dismally on the broad backs of staid farmhorses. There was the swing of concerted action under a master hand; the threatening stir of a sullen wind before the breaking of the storm.

In the interim, the British fleet had leisurely approached to within easy distance of the town and deliberately lay-to. I have always believed that Provost and Yeo, who accompanied this expedition, again thought of themselves, as they had before, in the light of cats playing with a helpless mouse, the slaughter of which rodent was to be prolonged by the cruel felines for their edification. The careless manner in which they allowed us to make all preparations would tend to confirm what was told after the battle, which was that the enemy understood that all the regulars and all but two companies of the militia were with Dearborn and Chauncey. However this may have been, it was quite evident that they considered the taking of the town a holiday and did not know of the troops Dearborn had sent back. They wasted precious time in which, unready as we were, they might have given us short shift. Instead of paying us speedy attention, they employed their entire fleet to chase a number of American barges that had come in sight from Oswego. Twelve of these they caught, but small

comfort it gave them, as the crews got away and escaped to the woods, the majority afterward joining us. Seven of the barges, by clever dodging, outsailed the British boats and got into port. Most opportunely, we found them to contain a portion of a regiment of infantry, under Colonel Aspinwall, on the way from Oswego to our beleaguered hamlet. They had not discovered the enemy till he was doubling Sixtown Point, then it was a stern chase and a race. Their comrades, who had been forced ashore to the woods, arrived late that evening, increasing our defending force.

Following their dash for the barges, the enemy's ships lay lazily in an increasing calm far out in the lake. There were the brigs Royal George, Wolfe and Earl of Moira, two gunboats and three schooners, all heavily armed. There were also forty barges carrying twelve hundred men as a storming party. The fleet was manned with the king's best gunners, who were supposed to be shelling us while we were being taken by the storming party. No hurry was shown and it was apparent that the enemy would considerately allow us to get ready for him before he should graciously deign to fall upon and crush us the next morning. Therefore, we lost no time.

The militia from Watertown and other settlements arrived steadily during the day. As fast as they came they were armed and sent to Horse Island, where the enemy was expected to land. There were six hundred of these militia, mostly raw, undisciplined and sans experience. There were also about four hundred regulars against the twelve hundred odd of the king's men. For at this

time it was regular versus regular. One could not depend upon the untrained militia, though there were some glorious exceptions during the war.

Horse Island which was then heavily wooded, lay an easy distance out into the lake from the further end of the long bluff. It was connected with the mainland by a sand bar that was at that time nearly dry. The beach opposite afforded a natural breastwork in the shape of a ridge of gravel five feet high. Further south, along the shore, stretched a strip of woods which had been obstructed as much as possible with a rude abattis of felled trees.

General Brown, tireless and watchful, spent the entire night in perfecting the plan of defense. The batteries along the cliff were hastily unlimbered, plenty of ammunition being ready to hand, for, if the opposing fleet desired to co-operate with the infantry, the ships would require a favoring wind and would have to pass directly within range of our guns. About four hundred militia, with six pounders, under Colonel Mills of the Albany Volunteers, were stationed near the shore opposite Horse Island, with orders to reserve their fire till the enemy should come within pistol shot. The remainder of the militia, under Colonel Gresham Tuttle, were on the edge of the woods back of a clearing, and Colonel Backus, with his dismounted dragoons, were stationed in the woods that skirted the town, with orders to advance toward Horse Island as soon as the enemy landed there. Colonel Aspinwall, with his Oswego regulars, was posted to the left of Backus, and the artillerymen, under Lieutenant Ketcham, were stationed on the low, outlying work of Fort Tompkins, whose sole armament consisted of a thirty-two pounder on a pivot.

Other forts there were, but with no available force to occupy them. The militia on the shore were instructed, if driven from their position, to fall back and annoy the right flank of the enemy as he advanced toward the town. Colonel Tuttle was directed, in the same event, to attack their rear and destroy their boats.

The enemy made no move during the night save to land a party of savages on the Henderson shore, as a messenger from that town arrived to inform us the succeeding morning, breathless and hot with haste. It was evidently intended to creep up and take the militiamen in the rear. General Brown warned the men to look out for such an ambush and posted pickets to that end. John and I looked at each other with uneasiness. We both thought of a supposed corpse which might after all, through the grace of its master, the devil, be still quickened.

"The providence of God has not deserted us," said my father the next morning. For the morning of May the twenty-ninth, 1813, was one without a breath. Not the whisper of a breeze stirred the pulse of the dead lake which lay, like a still mill pond, in shadowed silence. It was weird, it was uncanny, this intense calm, lending the sheen of a great mirror to the sweep of waters that were wont to be always heaving under the beating wings of warring winds. There was a startling clarity in the atmosphere. The king's ships, lying motionless, far off on the still waters, stood out against the arching sky clear cut as cameos. They would be unable to assist the soldiery, lying helpless as they were, too far away for gun fire.

"It is as if the Voice had spoken, 'Peace, be still,'

and the calm descended for our deliverance," said Renee, standing with Dorothy in the doorway, as I bade them be of good cheer and hastened to quarters. Those left in the little household remained heroically calm, as once before, confidently awaiting the issue.

Had the fleet been able to lend assistance to the regulars that day, our undoing must have been inevitable. But that great calm brooded and the winds slept on, only awakening when the puffs of a breeze from the southward smote the spread sails and the king's ships, laden with a beaten enemy, pointed their prows reluctantly toward Frontenac, while hoarse cheers arose from the bluff beyond, and, from its brink, the growl of the shore batteries rolled across the rippling bay that lay, touched with red and gold, in the dying glory of the sunset.

With the gray dawn we beheld a cloud of boats, crowded with troops, putting off from the ships that lay supine on the glassy surface of the slumbering lake. They made for Horse Island, from which General Brown had recalled during the night the detachments of militia originally posted there, thinking it better to make a concerted stand on the mainland. The boats grounded and the redcoats, landing, formed without molestation. Soon the red line began the march, in an intense, strained silence, across the bar to the mainland.

So still was the air, even the usual stirrings of nature being hushed, that the sharp commands of the distant officers were distinctly audible. As the column started from the island even these ceased. So they came on, in an appalling silence, while the defenders on the shore held their fire. When they

were almost upon us the word was given and a volley rang out with startling effect in the stillness. Gaps appeared in the red line, but they closed up and the troops rushed on, now at a double quick. A moment later the thirty-two pounder roared out, hurling death into the ranks that it seemed as if nothing could stop.

Never before or since, in the recollection of those of us who lived that day, has the atmosphere of this region possessed the weird qualities which it held that morning. The air, so strangely still before the approach of this leaden storm, was an immense sounding board. The singular calm extended for miles, so that upon the crest of heaven-kissing hills as in the dipping valleys, not a leaf stirred, all nature seeming to listen for the thunder of the cannonade. To this day the old men tell the wondering youngsters who surround them how the rattle of the musketry was heard upon the Rutland hills, twenty miles away, and how the booming of the batteries growled in faint reverberations, echoing among the wooded Adirondack foothills of Lewis county, distant nigh fifty miles.

The enemy, unfaltering in the face of the leaden storm, advanced, as if on dress parade, up to the ridge of sand. A moment more, and they halted, pouring in a volley. A breath of time and another came. Our raw militia, unused to carnage, wavered. There was a terrifying hum in the bullets that cut the foliage about them and found occasional lodgement in the breast of a comrade. There was an added terror in the red column which now plunged forward toward them behind a grim hedge of bristling bayonets. It was too awful.

The militiamen, unnerved, yelling as if in the grip of some horrific nightmare, turned and fled incontinently toward the town.

John and I, who had been posted with our commands with the others, found the most of them fleeing in the wake of the rest. Everywhere officers were pleading, cursing and threatening the men who ran in a mad rabble. I can remember shouting till I was hoarse, hurling myself against the rushing throng in a wild effort to stop it and being borne back by it like a bit of wreckage in an angry sea. And near at hand was John, laying about him with flail-like arms, his dark, bearded face drawn with rage, black eyes blazing. Like a Colossus the giant stood, the human tide breaking against him as if he had been an unyielding rock. He seized the collar of a flying wretch in one mighty hand, hurling him shrieking back toward the advancing redcoats, while the other fist, shaking in air, suddenly shot out, stopping the progress of another fugitive with a thumping blow that stretched him quivering on the sod. He was Thor materialized, a gigantic, impelling force; the acme of savage, unloosed power, of might unleashed.

But this could not continue. Nothing earthly could stop that panic-stricken rout. John and I, with a huddle of others who had stood with us, were presently alone, the redcoats nearly upon us. A volley came from the thick woods to our left. The figure of an officer in our uniform was discernible.

"Captain McNitt!" shouted John. "Make for him, men! Thank God! we're not all curs!" And we sprinted for the woods, just in time. The two sergeants, Cyrenus and Noadiah, to whom this

day's work was to bring future advancement, ran with us, after them Abner Holcomb, whose stoical calm in the face of danger was destined also to win recognition. Abner was proceeding in philosophic indifference to all risks. Cyrenus shook his lean fist at the flying militiamen, now far ahead, and swore like a lost soul. Upon the fat face of Noadiah, which flopped painfully as he lumbered on, there reposed agitatedly a righteous scorn at the flight of the frightened. He was running from policy, not fear. He was of the vintage of the Revolution. As for Abner, the inevitable, whatever transpired, was inevitable. That was all.

We gained the woods without mishap, joining McNitt's command, which had been placed on the extreme left of the flanking party of the militia. He and his gallant men had refused to run with the others, but continued instead to fire. The men were encouraged in standing their ground by the presence of General Brown, who, in the midst of the disaster, was imperturbable. He calmly directed us to retire to the town as the enemy advanced through the woods, annoying them with our fire as much as possible. This we did, and a constant exchange of shots was maintained without, however, much damage to either side, owing to the undergrowth.

Colonel Backus had obeyed instructions, soon encountering the enemy he had marched forward to meet and hindering the progress of the redcoats to a considerable extent. Backus' regiment, composed of men as experienced as the king's own, retired slowly before their foes through the half-cleared woods toward the town, pouring in galling volleys.

By this time General Brown, summoning John

and me with the few men of our companies that remained had left Captain McNitt's company for the purpose of hurrying ahead to try to rally some of the scattered militia. Upon gaining the clearing next the village we were struck with consternation to see flame and smoke enwrapping the storehouses that contained the spoils of Little York. With an exclamation, General Brown hurried to the spot, we after him. We feared that a detachment of the enemy had gained the rear. Arrived there, we found that the destruction was due to a blunder of our own side. The panic of the militia had spread like a pestilence to those in charge at the town and Lieutenant Chauncey had ordered the storehouses to be fired, which was as it should have been if the scampering fools had not lied.

Ah, those militiamen! Though I sit to-day with the frost in my hair and the wrinkles in my cheeks, the curse in my heart is as hearty and young for their cowardice as it was that morning, when I clenched my two fists and swore as best I knew how as I beheld a half million in stores go up in writhing flames. I saw men laboring to save the brig Pike, which had been fired upon the stocks, when we had shouted that the militiamen were liars and cowards, that the day might yet be won. I saw the prize schooner, Duke of Gloucester, smoking to her doom, and, as I watched, I saw also the gallant lieutenants, Tallman and Whiting, board her and extinguish the blaze that was eating its way to her fearsome cargo of gunpowder. And this while the militia ran, ran like dogs with lolling tongues, bellowing like mad bulls through the village and into the woods beyond, not to stop till they should be safe at their homes, with their women folk to comfort them. One indeed—and the tale will be

tradition's heritage for generations—romped o'er hill and dale for twenty miles, to finally fall utterly exhausted, panting like a spent hound, on the crest of Rutland's highest hill. And though with shame for my countrymen I own it, if tradition should one day tell of a new Wandering Jew, one who ran rather than walked his weary, endless round, I should verily believe him to be one of those militiamen.

It has been said that if you kill off all the officers of an American regiment of regulars, a drummer boy shall lead them and they will follow him to victory or death. It is also said that if you rob a British column of its head it is a flock without a shepherd and the sheep disperse. These facts were strikingly attested on this memorable morning.

General Brown, relieved in a measure to find the enemy still all on one side, hurried to try and rally some of the militia, who had repented of their haste and were returning at leisure, shamefaced and anxious to make amends. John and I, together with Cyrenus and Noadiah, with Abner at their heels, secured a handful and hurried to do what we could to help Backus, who had fallen back to the clearing, the enemy still advancing. A moment after our arrival the brave colonel fell, mortally wounded. The regiment betrayed no agitation, but slowly retiring, inch by inch, entered some log barracks in the clearing from which they discharged a volley with terrible effect. All this while the ships, far out, were discharging their guns at intervals and the batteries on the bluff were returning the fire. But the distance was too great and no harm resulted to either from this cannonade.

Through the wounds and mishaps to the sortie the immediate command of the enemy's column had devolved upon Captain Gray, of the quartermaster general's department, whose gallantry inspired his men with confidence. Walking backward and swinging his sword, he shouted, "Come on, boys, the day is ours! Remember Little York!" when he suddenly fell inert, immediately expiring. I heard an odd chuckle at my elbow and turned. It was Cyrenus. Smoke was curling from the muzzle of his rifle.

Simultaneously there came from the woods on the right a rattling volley of musketry, striking dismay to the disheartened enemy, who thought it came from reinforcements of regulars. As it proved, General Brown had succeeded in rallying about a hundred of the militia, who, hidden in the dense woods, pumped in a flank fire at close range. At any rate, the enemy whirled, as had our poor militia, in ignominous retreat. We left the block-houses and Brown's rallied forces burst from the woods, all following in keen pursuit. The British sought to pick up their wounded but we pressed close, forcing them to a speed most indecorous. They made for their boats, now in hot haste. The retreat had become a rout.

John and I plunged ahead in our eagerness, outstripping the others. Suddenly there came from the left a great crackling of underbrush and there burst into view a cloud of tawny, rushing forms. We were surrounded. I remember a sinewy hand clutching my throat, of the thud of my rifle butt as I brought it clubbed down upon a skull crowned with a mane of greasy black hair. I caught a glimpse of a hideous, swarthy face, convulsed with

pain as the form fell to the earth. Then, full upon my head, fell a sickening blow from behind. The world went black as I went down, with a sight of John fighting like a bulldog in the midst of a pack of snarling terriers ahead.

Darkness gathered like a storm, pierced with lightning flashes of pain. A watery murmur sounded, deepening at times into a hungry, truculent roar. Then, after a long time, my eyes opened.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE STRENGTH OF TEN

My eyes opened, but only a black void, which they could not pierce, pressed in upon me. Light appeared, however, in the shape of the hot flashes of pain that rent my cranium as I roused wholly from my stupor. I blinked blurred eyes and strove to clap my hands to my hurt head as I groaned. I became conscious that they were fastened securely, tied at the wrists. My ankles had been similarly bound.

Where was I? I seemed to move steadily forward in the gloom. I felt above me, bewildered, rolling upon my side and extending my bound hands. They encountered rough planking and a pile of what seemed to be cordage. I noted a vague rippling, lapping sound outside of my prison. The events of the day shaped themselves in my jarred brain and the dawn of understanding broke unpleasantly upon me. I was clearly a prisoner in the hold of one of the king's ships and was bound once more for Frontenac, but this time at a disheartening disadvantage. Truly in this game of battledore I was just now a badly battered shuttlecock!

The situation was most serious. I had heretofore been able to play my role of Stranahan with undetected impunity on the other side, but now I

would enter Frontenac under conditions that would be certain to expose the cheat. Had I fallen into the hands of any other man, it might have been quite possible for me to explain matters on the ground that the role I was supposed to be playing at the Harbor demanded my presence in the field against my brothers in arms. But though I had not seen him, I knew instinctively the identity of the commander of the cloud of savages that had captured me. My captor knew me and I would be revealed in Frontenac in my true colors. The lie I had lived there, I grimly told myself, would be nailed with the scaffolding they would erect for my outgoing, for it would be short shift with a proved spy. I swallowed with a foretaste of choking and stared into the gloom.

In the instant in which John and I had been surrounded I had glimpsed the ill-favored faces of a score or more of savages. As I sank, insensible under the stunning blow I had received, with the giant before me towering over the jackals that surrounded him, dealing heavy blows with the butt of his clubbed rifle, the recollection had flashed upon me of the band of savages landed by the fleet at Henderson the day before.

As I lay in the darkness I knew that our discomfiture must have come from this source. The redskins had undoubtedly made their way through the forest to the village, to attack it in the rear. Probably those we had met constituted an advance guard and there was a larger band further back. They had come just in time to witness the repulse of the king's regulars. Rushing through the woods to join their white brethren in their retreat, they had come upon John and myself, rushing ahead

of the troops who were far behind us, intent upon a reckless pursuit of the flying enemy. The rest was plain. I was once more afloat for Frontenac, and John—where was John? Did he accompany me, or would they bury him, to-morrow or the next day, with the rest of the dead at the Harbor?

"No," I muttered, gazing reflectively up into the funereal gloom as I sprawled. "No, I'm cursed if they will! The vermin couldn't kill him!"

Somehow the thought gave me comfort despite the jeopardy of my own neck. There was something thrilling in the thought of that great bulk in action, in the memory of those terrific arms that fell like flails upon the unjust, the force of which sent men reeling like ninepins, bleeding and broken; before whose unloosed power the might of most seemed puny as the feeble kickings of a mewling babe. The picture of the giant aroused was one that a man might well take with him to the steps of the scaffold, to give him grace to die with a fillip for the hangman and a gibe for the mocking multitude. It was a picture of Homeric mould, one that brought from dead ages the red flash of the battle in the arena; of the straining hands of the gladiator twisting the neck of the struggling bull; of the frenzied howls of the mad throng that packed the amphitheatre, wild with the homage that the world has paid to cruel, resistless power since the sightless Samson pulled down the pillars of the temple—and before.

So it was that though I rushed with the mind into the very shadow of the scaffold, bound hand and foot in the hold of the unknown brig that was my prison, my eyes could sparkle and my nostrils flare with the remembered sight of my dynamic

friend, as I had often seen him, arising in memory. He was not dead, not he! At the worst he bore me company in some other ship. And perhaps——

A sound, near at hand, disturbed my reflections. Footsteps approached, evidently descending to the hold. A moment more and the glare of a lantern flashed in my eyes, nearly blinding me.

"Well, well," rumbled a deep, musical voice, one I knew too well. "What ails your eyes, my puppy friend? Gad! you are young yet. They blink like an owl's or a new-born kitten's."

With sundry grunts I drew myself painfully into a sitting posture, my back against a cask. My eyes, now unwinking, gazed into the mottled, ugly face above me. The most of it, through God's grace, was mercifully hidden with a bristling red beard. His lips, drawn like a dog's at the corners with a sardonic grin, exposed his yellowed fangs. In the weird light of the lantern, his short, broad body looked oddly squat. The coarse neck, swollen with muscle, showed redder than his beard as he seated himself on an overturned cask near me.

"So it's you, is it?" I commented. "I thought you were in hell."

"And the wish fathered the thought, I suppose?" he rejoined, leering at me.

"'Hope, long deferred, maketh the heart sick," I quoted dryly. "But the devil needs you above for a while, it is quite evident. Had I the use of my two hands, I would try to shorten your term of service."

"You!" he sneered. "Have a care, boy, lest I conclude to break you in two right here and now!"

"Unloose my hands and try it!" I broke out, my voice hoarse with passion, for the hateful

personality of the brute maddened me. "You murdering coward!"

He viewed me with a mild, ludicrous curiosity that was maddening.

"Baby want his pap?" he asked me soothingly. "He must be quiet or his daddy will spank him." I was speechless with fury.

He regarded me with half closed yellow eyes, like a solicitous cat. "'Fore God, infant," he resumed, in a whining tone of injury, "you wrong your pappy. He may be a murderer, but he's no coward. Don't you suppose I ran a greater risk than any of your cursed crew at Little York? I was closer to the magazine than any of you."

It was undeniable. "I hoped they would find your scattered fragments throughout Canada, to end with your trouser buttons in Frontenac!" I exclaimed savagely. "I don't see how you escaped."

"Through hell's mercy," he replied, with perfect if impious truth. "As for my trouser buttons, they will be in Frontenac to-morrow, attached to my trousers, and I shall occupy both legs of those useful garments. You will be there, also, my young ape, and if I mistake not, you will remain there or elsewhere, safely housed, till we have completed the little job of annexing your dog's country."

Imprisoned, eh? A ray of hope cheered me. He, at least, did not know that to his crew I was one king's own Stranahan. But the hope died, for my emerging from the ship a prisoner would lead to instant recognition, with the story he had to tell, and investigations would be made which would wind up my career with distressing abruptness.

"Would you mind telling me where I am and what o'clock it is?" I queried, with mock courtesy.

"You are kicking your heels in the hold of the good ship christened for the Royal George, God save him," answered this gallant subject. "I should judge it lacks two hours of midnight."

"So," I commented, easing my numbed wrists as well as I was able. "You must have delayed your departure, or are we already nearly to Frontenac?"

"Hardly," he answered. "The other ships are some distance in advance. The Royal George, which has the honor of conveying Sir James Yeo and My Lord Provost, hung around till dusk in the hope that your fools yonder would obey the word we sent and surrender in the King's name. But we had to sail without that courtesy."

I laughed and he showed his wolfish teeth in a sardonic grin. "Small call for us to surrender," said I, "unless we pinned our flag on the flying coat tails of your king's regulars, and truth to tell, we could not catch them. You are excellent sprinters. But why were you at so much trouble to capture me?"

"You!" he exclaimed, with disconcerting scorn. "You flatter yourself! Who the devil do you suppose wanted you? You were merely an accidental quarry. It was that big hound that was with you I wanted, curse him!" His evil face expressed a sadly thwarted ambition.

"Why, didn't you get him?" I asked, grinning amiably.

"Get him!" he snarled, rage distorting his ugly face, "all hell couldn't get him! Two of my best men brained, about six more laid out half killed and he disappearing in the woods without a scratch! Blast him! Can I never kill him?" And he burst into an evil storm of oaths.

"You beast!" I cried, bitter anger engulfing me like a flood. "You soulless wretch, who would murder your own brother!"

He started. "What's that?" he exclaimed. "My brother!"

I glared at him, blazing anger in my eyes, bound and helpless, but reckless of consequences.

"Oh, I know you!" I burst out. "Geoffrey Aberdeen alias Red Rolfe, murderer, thief, bravo, adventurer and would-be despoiler of women! You ruined your brother, driving him from home a branded criminal, made so by your lying tongue, you blackguard! You entered a poor cabin, unprotected in the wilderness, with a gang of your red cutthroats and tore from their shelter a defenceless girl and her sick old father! You marked the graves of two of your own dirty brood as theirs, and by the desecration recording a death for her that was God's mercy compared with the living one to which you would have consigned her! And she—she would have died by her own hand had she not been saved by your own father. You murdered, in cold blood, my comrades and your own at Little York, out of the hell-born hate of all the world that is in you! You seek to kill your own brother, whom I have seen more than once stay his hand when the good God would have smiled had he torn your devil's soul from your besotted body! I know you and your band, pack of murderers, ravishers and cutthroats! God in heaven!" I cried. Does He indeed rule, that He will permit such a snake to live!"

He was bending over me with livid lips, snarling like a dog. "I shall finish you now!" he muttered, mouthing the words with cruel relish. His great

hands closed upon my throat. I strangled and the dim glow in the hold went black.

There was a soft sound near me and the next instant the hands were torn from my neck. I heard the thud of a heavy body against the opposite side of the hold. A great form near me, crouched like a cat, launched after it. There was a moment's struggling in the darkness and two bodies, in a death grapple, rolled toward me. I saw the taller man come uppermost, looming in the shadow, kneeling on the bravo's chest. One sinewy hand was knotted around the under man's throat, holding him helpless.

John, for it was he, held the bravo with perfect ease, powerful though the brute was. "I shall have to tie him," he ruminated, as coolly as if he had been about to bind a bundle of merchandise in quarters, "and it will be first necessary to quiet him."

"Cut these cords," I suggested, struggling frantically, "and I will help you."

"It is not necessary," he returned. "Besides, I must not leave him. He is too noisy."

Suddenly lifting the head of the bravo with the one powerful hand, he brought it down with a terrific crash upon the planking of the hold. The huge frame quivered and lay still. He left it, and, coming over to me, cut my bonds. We used them to tie his brother, who bade fair to remain quiet for some time. John took the precaution to stuff an improvised gag, formed of sail cloth, in his mouth, fastening it securely. "When they come down for their prisoner," he commented, "I think they will agree that the trend of evolution is not necessarily upward." Indeed, the fellow made an uninviting figure enough.

"You see, Gilbert," explained John, "I would

not have left you, but I was under the impression that you got away also. I was quite busy myself and had no time for observations. Afterward I saw them taking you with them and planned accordingly. I thought at first that they would sail at once, which would have necessitated my starting to-morrow for Frontenac, for I would have got you out or found my finish trying it. I observed, however, that they lay by. They had men busy picking up the wounded in the afternoon under guard and sending them to the ships in boats. We did not disturb them. I took pains to notice that you were put aboard the Royal George. I prowled around through the woods, at my wits' end for some means of getting aboard this ship. It grew dusk and most of the boats had left Horse Island, beyond the bar, on their last trip over. There was but one detachment of men left by this time, a half dozen or so employed in carefully looking for any of the wounded who might have been passed by. I caught sight of a young naval officer among them, a man I had happened to meet casually on an occasion at Montreal. I knew he was on the Royal George and made up my mind that this last boatload belonged to that ship.

"I had nearly determined to try and get out to Horse Island undetected in the dusk and then let the last boat take me over hanging to the stern, when the question was solved for me. Evidently satisfied that there were no more wounded lying about, the young officer called to his men to leave the woods, where they had been hunting for possibly disabled comrades, and proceeded across the bar to Horse Island and the boat.

"A moment later there was a crackling of the

brush near me and the next instant there faced me, though you may be incredulous, Gilbert, a man fully as tall and big as I. What was still more fortunate, he was dark in complexion and had a heavy beard of the same hue as my own. He did not notice me and was going by, but I stepped in his way.

"'A moment, friend,' said I. 'Are you with the Royal George?'

"'Yes,' he answered, scowling, 'if it's any of your business.'

"'It is,' I told him. 'Take off your coat, my friend, and be quick about it, for whether you go back to it or I go in your place has got to be settled right away.'

"Well, whoever he was, he was game, but he didn't have the muscle that should have gone with his bigness. I had him thrown in short order and took care to throw him hard. The back of his head hit a convenient trunk and he didn't get up. I pulled off his coat, which he had been vain enough to keep on, and exchanged hats with him, his being a wider slouch than mine. I hadn't my uniform trousers on, nor he either, and as both were of dark material I had no difficulty in simulating him. I hurried after the rest of the party, overtaking them just before they got to the island. They growled that they thought I was never coming and called me Sim. I growled briefly in reply and seemed ill tempered, so after a little they let me alone. I pulled Sim's oar over to the Royal George. It was quite dark when we boarded her, and, through sheer good luck, by keeping to myself I managed to remain undetected. I was relieved upon the ship's getting under way shortly after we boarded

her, for I had begun to worry about Sim, who might have revived and found some way of getting aboard before she started. I regretted not having torn up my own coat and used the pieces to tie him with, but I was pressed for time just then and forgot it. However, all's ended well. I did not know where you were at first, but finally saw my dear brother yonder making for the hold and followed him down."

"So you heard it all!" I exclaimed.

"All," he replied. "And let me advise you," he added soberly, "never again to tell a man the truth about himself when your hands are tied. He won't like it and neither will you. But I guess that gang above are dropping asleep now, and we must be getting out of this. I wanted to remain till it was quiet. Leave your boots here, for we must make no noise. Mine are on the deck. Took them off just before I came down."

Red Rolfe had not stirred, but was breathing heavily, showing some faint signs of returning animation. "Why don't you finish him?" I asked.

"Why should a white man kill him?" he retorted, stirring the inert body contemptuously with his foot. "Perhaps some day his Indians will do it."

We made our way silently up the ladder. It was John's plan to steal a boat if luck favored, letting it easily into the water and gaining it immediately, then quietly cutting loose. It was a desperate chance and could not be accomplished in any case unless the deck was all but deserted. We gained the deck, gliding like shadows and making our way toward the stern. Clouds banked the sky, only a few stars peeping through rifts in the ragged masses. It was very dark. Fortune seemed to favor us.

Just at that unlucky moment I pitched headlong, a couple of howls arising beneath me. Mistaking them for shadows, I had fallen over two sleeping men. It was clearly time for action. I picked myself up and was over the rail an instant after John had cleared it. I went down for what seemed a mile, emerging at the surface blowing and gasping. The brig was already far ahead. I could hear excited voices on her deck, but she did not pause to send out exploring boats, it being evidently considered useless in the night to try to ascertain the cause of the disturbance. Owing to the darkness, I doubt if the men who were awakened adequately realized the cause, and I found in after days that my escape was not learned till accident had revealed a startling discovery. Some hours after the Royal George entered the port at Frontenac that morning, sympathetic hands undid the cords that bound a furious bravo, whose blistering blasphemies speedily followed the removal of the muffling gag.

However, to revert, I gasped and sputtered on the surface of Ontario, fresh from a breathless exploration of its depths. "Gilbert," spoke a voice near me. A moment more and we were swimming side by side, toward a bank of murk, far off, that might be land, revealed occasionaly by faint moonbeams as the clouds shifted. We stopped to tread water and remove a part of our encumbering clothing.

We swam, it seemed, for hours. I was exhausted, but the giant beside me seemed tireless. "It's no use," I finally gasped. "Go on, John, I'm done," and sank.

I came to myself to find him bearing me, a dead

weight, swimming on his side, one arm supporting me, the other cleaving the water, strong and steady as a piston rod. I relieved him and struggled on.

So it went, on through long hours till the gray dawn. I swam when I could. At other times I lay nearly senseless on the arm of the man whom it seemed nothing could overwhelm, who appeared wholly tireless.

With the faint dawn of the new day there stretched, close at hand, a friendly island. We gained it, then lay for a time inert. Presently a sail showed, nearing us. We waited in keen suspense. They had seen us and were sailing toward us. Enemies or friends?

John's eyes were like a hawk's. When she was still too far away for me to see the color of the fluttering flag at the peak, he whooped in exultation, fetching me a resounding whop on the back that sent me staggering.

"All right, Gilbert!" he shouted. "She's one of Chauncey's little fellows, an armed schooner. We're due for the Harbor!"

CHAPTER XXVII

FUTILITY

I was absent for a time that autumn on an important secret mission to Albany, for my militia command had recently been merged with John's, he commanding the two, whose combined numbers were after all at that time not equal to the required quota of one. I was now regularly connected with the Secret Service Bureau. My successful ingratiation into the confidence of the United States Government I had communicated to my supposed British comrades, the fact causing naturally great felicitation among them. I was now in the unique position of being the accredited secret agent of two warring governments and my cards had to be played with extreme care to avoid a faux pas across the border, where the bold game was as yet unsuspected. I still sailed in smooth waters, but at any moment they might become tempest-lashed. I congratulated myself that as yet no occasion had arisen for summoning me to Montreal. That must have meant the instant relinquishment of the hoax so beneficial to us, for I naturally could not risk a personal meeting with Sir George Provost or his immediate circle that had despatched Stranahan upon his ill-starred mission. I had remained fortunate thus far in not encountering any one who had met Stranahan in the brief interval after his arrival

from England and before his crossing to our side. The few other spies from the opposite border whom I met from time to time were usually agents delegated to receive my reports as Stranahan, which I composed with discretion. I misled the enemy where I could, but where others of their emissaries, of whose operations I kept myself informed, were in a position to know of the actual state of affairs, I reported truly, well knowing that, owing to my peculiar position I could easily gain more than I gave away. However, the confidence of the British had so grown in my discretion that I was left with a free hand, which diminished the risk. One or two suspicious characters at the Harbor, who might have made trouble for me, had been cared for and were where they would be powerless for annoyance till the war was done.

Just now at Albany I was sending, as Stranahan, information northward across the water by a certain "underground" route, that was clear as day to our side, of contemplated increases in the defensive measures along the border, which, commissioned by our own military powers, I was now in a fair way to actually bring about by the strongest representations of need. While there I received a letter from John relating to the naval situation on the lake that fall, which communication, yellowed with age, I still preserve. The futility of Ontario's naval record was a subject on which John felt deeply.

"Well, Gilbert," he wrote, "we have had a running fight or two with Yeo since you left. Running in all that the term implies. Our ships, laden with seamen and land troops, with marines and gunners fresh from ocean service; Yeo's equipment likewise; a meeting; a few mutual shots at a depressing

long range; maybe a few splinters; perhaps a fatality or two, really, I cannot remember. Then the parting; the running retirement of the rival commodores in opposite directions; each to his own place; each to indite to his government a lengthy report concerning the things left undone that, God knows, and the people as well, ought to be done. Do you remember a certain recent message; a message pithy, laconic and withal immortal as the name subscribed to it; a message that will ring down the ages till time shall crumble in its inevitable dust? Pardon this poetic fervor, Gilbert, but I refer to that briefly glorious 'We have met the enemy and they are ours.' Lord! boy, could we but have been there!

"I have referred to the splinters. Sometimes there are not even those. Only last week we sailed proudly out of the Harbor, laden deep with men who were spoiling for a fight. Presently we captured a frightened Canadian merchantman. There was no bloodshed. We reveled in the supremacy of the lake. Finally a strange sail appeared in the offing. More materialized, the union jack at their peaks. Chauncey took tally. God's mercy! Yeo's fleet held one more brig and two more schooners than his own! And back we came piking under all sail to the Harbor, like a brood of downy chicks to the wing of a maternal hen, and the ring of hammers is again heard in the shipyards. Meanwhile, Yeo, succeeding to the 'supremacy,' swaggers up and down the lake and will so swagger till Chauncey's reappearance with additional boats. Then, for it is already a mutually thrice told tale, he will in his order turn stern and fly for Frontenac and more ships. It is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. It is opera bouffe!"

And yet, mused I, upon the reading of that letter, as I replaced it in my pocket, after all, one must be charitable. Being away from the scene of inoperation, away where the lust for action was not being constantly frostbitten by the chill of over-caution, one was enabled, by grace of the altered perspective, to take a more judicial, dispassionate view of men and things. Yeo and Chauncey, were they not achieving according to their lights? And if their lights were but tallow dips, what then? It was the common illuminant of the time, and in the universe of God there are few suns in the waste of lesser star-dust, dead moons and nebulae. Also, in a crowded world of men, reflected I, in the many fields of effort, the Chaunceys and the Yeos stand, after all, rather above the average. And the Perrys, in any line, can but be few. Napoleon, I meditated, even now fighting his last Titanic unparalleled fight against the monstrous, crushing European coalition which was seeking his undoing, could count his equals, in all the preceding ages of the world, upon the fingers of a hand.

Having transacted my business at Albany, I returned to the Harbor through the autumnal glories of the forest, arriving there late in September, in readiness to accompany General Wilkinson's army in its projected Canadian invasion that fall. The advisability of my accompanying my own forces had been gravely decided upon by my Canadian chiefs, as I had represented to them by letter to Montreal that I could probably be of some use by going along. I received a reply endorsing the idea and enclosing another regular remittance of Stranahan's pay. I will mention here, though it is merely

incidental, that the sum total of these remittances remained intact, and when the adventurous hoax was ended, it was returned untouched to Montreal. While filling the unsuspected gap in the enemy's secret service, I was far from being capable of availing myself of the perquisites thereto.

Upon reaching home I left my horse at the stable and proceeded to quarters. John was there, coat off, shirt sleeves rolled to the elbow, directing the unloading of some wagon loads of supplies. He paused a moment to give me welcome with a grip that made me wince, then quickly resumed his oversight of the yokels, who needed it.

Two of them, big beefy fellows, had just desisted in a clumsy effort to hoist an unwieldy cask of rum in the back of the wagon. They now stood before it with helpless head scratchings, perplexedly staring. With a wink at me, John stepped to the wagon, tilted the heavy cask over on its side, rolled it to the edge of the wagon box, and bending his broad shoulders, got under it with an upward lift, and, carrying it the short intervening distance to the storehouse, sent it rolling with a mighty heave down the long floor to join its fellows. He laughed as he marked the yokels' goggling eyes.

"Get the knack," he admonished them briefly. "Main strength is not the secret. It's the application."

A voice, a remembered voice, dirged at my elbow. "Them's more sperrits," it said drearily, "than I ever see any one man stand up under at any one time afore."

"How are you, Abner?" asked I cordially, though I felt a draught. "How is Betsey?"

"She sends word," responded Abner, with a

distinctly aggrieved air, "that this last crop war bigger'n ever."

"That was too bad," I murmured sympathetically. And Abner nodded funereally, nor turned a gray hair. "And Noadiah and Cyrenus, are they both well?" I asked.

"He an' him don't speak yet," wailed Abner. "I hev tried some to rekerncile them, for it's onpleasant havin' them as has been sorter neighbors o' your'n not noticin' of t'other. But they won't rekerncile worth a cuss," and he ambled aimlessly away, his wrinkled face enwrapped in deepened gloom. I shivered and started for the house. On the way I passed the cottage of the Widow Hankinson. Casually glancing through the window I noted two chairs standing within hailing distance of one another. Upon one of these rested demurely the widow; upon the other palpitated Noadiah, steeped in the blissful witchery of her smile. Ah, Cupid, young, busy imp, by whose sweet sorcery winter, renewed, is again dandled in the lap of spring!

Two fair damsels met me at the door. One I kissed, nor durst similarly salute the other, as I was minded, which fact I judged to be divined by the one I kissed, from the kindling laughter in her eyes. And with a venomous glance, which in no way subdued her as it should, I, in some natural confusion, fawned foolishly upon the radiant Gypso, even as he fawned foolishly on me. And Renee's robin, from his perch on her shoulder, chirped scornfully at me, and his beady eyes, in which malice rioted, bored into my soul. I greeted my invalid father, sitting helpless in his chair. And presently John and M. De Montefort came in and we all sat down to supper.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

The oars swung in rhythmic, silent unison, with muffled sweeps, the heavy boat urged on under the steady impetus of powerful backs and brawny arms. The water lapped ceaselessly, murmuring weirdly in the darkness, against the boat's sides; the faint moan of a fitful, light wind sounded in the woods girting the distant shore, a deeper shadow line to the southward. Overhead there rolled in mighty, broken masses to the southeast, great smothering clouds, spitting at intervals a fine, cold rain, like spray. Occasionally there shone from over the huge shoulder of a monstrous cloud the weak rays of a watery moon, to be in an instant blotted out as the face of the waters gloomed again. And always the gentle, lifting swell, lulling and interminable; the sweep of the solemn cloud-cohorts of the sky; the stretch of the shrouded, sombre waters; the distant beat of the surf upon the sandy shore.

About us, splotches of added shadows in the gloom, moved silently forward the other transports. It was an hour past midnight. We kept on, tireless, grimly determined, for an object must be compassed with the dawn, an object involving the issue of that year, the last of this momentous war.

Sitting in the stern, I turned to the man next me.

Officers though we were, we had taken our turn at the oars with the rest, but had lately been relieved.

"It is to our everlasting good fortune," said I, in a subdued tone, "if Yeo's ships have remained in the vicinity of the Galloups, dispensing with scout work. If not——"

"If not," grimly responded Lieutenant Woolsey, "these stores stand an excellent chance of equipping Sir James' new boats at Frontenac, and we an equally good prospect of swelling the imprisoned population there. Even now there may be one of their schooners snooping about in this vicinity, though I hope we have anticipated them. I wish it was dawn. This darkness wears on a fellow's nerves."

"If they do come before we arrive," I observed, "and get within close range, which they must do to take us, these fellows of Appling's rifle corps will bore them some. I'm glad they're along. But perhaps our friends will elect to stand off and blow us out of the water at long range."

"No," replied Woolsey, "they won't do that. They want the stores, and to get them they'll be willing to take us with them." And we relapsed into silence while the men pulled on. Presently we relieved a couple of them, who were tiring.

The episode of which I am treating is obscure enough in the histories, yet upon it depended the issue of the year to us of either side of Ontario's warring borders. That closing winter of the war had been devoted to ship building at the Harbor, and a large patch of forest was converted into boats. A number of schooners had been built, and on May first, the Superior, a frigate pierced for sixty-six guns, was launched. The Mohawk and the Jones,

additional brigs, were still upon the stocks. The armament of the additional ships was due to arrive through Wood Creek and the Oswego River from Oswego, the rude roads being impassable with mud. The active spies knew of the expected arrival of the supplies. Indeed, I had been obliged to report it myself, to avoid possible suspicion. To possess these munitions became at once a matter of the greatest importance to the enemy, who planned a cunning descent upon Oswego. Had it been successful, fortune must have favored the British in this closing year of the struggle.

Oswego had not been occupied by regular troops since the Revolution. Its fort was dilapidated and defended but by five old guns, three of which had lost their trunnions. However, troops were rushed there in anticipation of the enemy's visit, as, through the advantage under which I was working, I had learned of the intended attack in a brief trip across the river, and, unobtrusively returning, had hastened to Sackets Harbor with the information. The enemy came to Oswego with a cloud of brigs, schooners and gunboats and some three thousand marines and foot soldiers, including two companies of the famous Glengarry Corps, on the morning of the fifth of May. An engagement in artillery resulted to our advantage and a landing party was repulsed. At daybreak the next morning the fleet again approached. After a three hours' fire they landed a considerable force, which captured public stores, burned the old Revolutionary barracks and returned to the fleet the next morning. General Drummond commanded their land forces and Commodore Yeo the fleet. Here would have been an excellent opportunity for Commodore Chauncey to

have been there and won a belated reputation, but he was busy at the Harbor, completing some more ships and making reports to the government of what he was going to do.

The naval stores desired by the enemy were at Oswego Falls, now Fulton, but Colonel Mitchell, who had with him five companies of light and heavy artillery, defended the port as long as possible, and, when compelled to retire from Oswego, took measures to make pursuit difficult Falling back slowly toward the Falls, he destroyed bridges and felled timber to obstruct the roads. The enemy did not follow, but boarded the fleet, which returned to its station near the Galloup Islands to intercept the passage of the prized stores, which they judged must pass near.

On May the twenty-eighth, under command of Lieutenant Woolsey and myself, with boatmen and attended by Appling's riflemen, the stores left Oswego Falls in eighteen boats, we in charge hoping to gain Stony Creek with them. They could then be brought up the creek to a point three miles from Henderson Harbor, which was a dozen miles from Sackets. It was for this object we were rowing through the dark, rainy night.

It was a difficult matter in those days to handle freightage in times of peace, to say nothing of periods of war. Getting the armament for the three frigates to this point had entailed no little labor. In good weather the supplies for Sackets Harbor were brought mostly by way of the Kahuahgo Valley or Redfield Woods route. The roads were impassable with mud, however, so the armament had been brought from New York on boats rigged with a single mast, which was jointed near the centerboard,

to be raised or lowered at convenience. A foot walk on each side served for men to push with poles when going up the streams. In this way, via the Hudson and its tributaries, they reached Wood Creek, entered Oneida Lake and continued down the Oswego river to Lake Ontario. I had charge of this detail, having been despatched to New York shortly after my return to Sackets Harbor, following the breaking up of Wilkinson's Camp at French Mills. I had conducted the stores to Oswego Falls some time previously. Later I had learned of the enemy's designs, had frustrated them thus far and now Woolsey and I were trying to land the stores at their destination, an object which we heartily wished at this moment had been accomplished.

The dawn came, the clouds dispersing in baffled, disorganized masses before the onslaught of a royal sun. There was still no sign of the enemy's fleet, and our spirits rose, the men bending with renewed vigor to their work. A sabbatarian calm lay on the waters, which was wholly fitting, since it was Sunday. Ere long, however, a brisk, favoring breeze sprang up and leg-o-mutton sails were quickly spread upon the squat, sturdy masts to assist our progress.

Eyes were constantly turned toward the middle of the lake with common anxiety. Those who look for trouble usually find it. About ten o'clock, even as the faint tones of a distant church bell echoed from the wooded southern shore, Woolsey grasped my arm. "Look!" said he, pointing.

Far away, small on the watery horizon, was a small schooner, coming toward us. On she came till she reached a distance from whence we judged her crew could easily with glasses determine our

identity and mission. Then she put about with all speed and diminished in the opposite direction.

"A scout!" remarked Woolsey grimly. "No Stony Creek for us now. We're lucky if we reach anywhere than Frontenac."

"We will ground the boats and smash or sink the stores first!" I exclaimed savagely. "But there's Big Sandy! We'll reach it; we must!" I shouted for the men to pull for the creek, and they did, like the good devils they were. And always, toiling like mad, we looked through blinding sweat out toward the open, scanning the horizon, from whence at any moment winged menace might come flying toward us on the deep. We had not long to wait. Ere long a splash of white sail revealed the forerunner of the king's ships and soon others showed plain against the blue background of the arching sky. But long ere the danger that rode the deep that day had come close enough for our discomfort, the mouth of the wide Big Sandy had been gained by all save one poorly manned transport, which fell behind and was duly captured, and up the protecting artery we pulled, still gallant and insensible to fatigue as so many crews of racers in their shells in a driving finish; up to safety and what proved an ultimate victory.

We disembarked and I sent an Indian runner to the Harbor to notify Chauncey and the others in command, and, with Lieutenant Woolsey, also dispatched couriers to secure teams to remove the stores overland to the Harbor.

You can find no mention in most histories of the engagement which followed, but it was of great importance. That consignment was most valuable. It contained the provision for the most formidable

frigates we had yet built, and, had the British secured it, they would have used the guns immediately for some craft they had ready for launching at Frontenac, but which were still without armament. While it was not written that Chauncey was to do anything worthy of record with his increased fleet, yet had the enemy secured this prize the situation would have been much worse. Thus far both sides, of naval strength nearly equal, had feared to strike the first decisive blow. Had Yeo captured these stores it is highly probable that, emboldened by his greatly superior strength thus afforded, he might have worked much destruction to the towns along the border. As it resulted, however, the two commodores continued their play at action till the war ended, with no harm to either.

The arrival of the runner at Sackets produced a sensation. Some regulars and several companies of militia were despatched to the scene. Among the latter was John's command, with which my old one was now merged. The readjustment had brought Cyrenus and Noadiah, the ancient rivals, into a constant association, which was, however, unmarked by the amities of daily intercourse. And with them was Abner, now a corporal, whose natural sorrow was deepened by the continued estrangement of his superiors.

Meanwhile a motley crew assembled on the banks of Sandy Creek to defend the stores. Some had guns, some muskets without the requisite locks, some with locks but no flints, some with no weapons but pitchforks. The throng was made up of backwoodsmen, hunters, trappers, farmers and boys, ready to wallop British regulars, though against heavy odds. However, reinforcements began speedily to arrive and there was a reception

Commemorating the Battle of Big Sandy, tought in the town of Ellisburg, June 29, 1814. Erected in the summer of 1926 by the Northern Frontier Chapter of the Daughters of 1812. Dedicated in the presence of over a thousand people.

preparing for the king's men up the creek as should surprise them right mightily.

The lake shore in this vicinity has always been the scene of innumerable wrecks. At that time there stood a house just south of the creek's mouth, which served as a beacon light and a place of refuge for shipwrecked sailors. An old fisherman kept the place, and the house was used a great deal as a hotel for anglers. The British stopped there and secured the information that the stores up the creek were guarded only by an insignificant force. The custodian spoke truly as far as he knew, but ever since the second attack on the Harbor the settlers along the whole frontier were on the alert and were even now collecting with marvelous haste to defend the prized supplies.

The British fleet lay off the shore through Sunday, not moving up to attack till dawn of the following day, which was resplendent, the air filled with the fresh odors of the spring. On up the creek moved the king's boats, piloted by a patriot who had been pressed, through fear of death, into service. The bands crashed martial music; the yellow sunlight flashed upon the red coats with their gilt buttons, glinting the white belts and the polished stocks of the muskets. It was a brave sight. Far ahead the wooded shores, on either side of the stream, showed no sign of the opposition. In the distance billowing above the tree tops, floated the American flag; that was all, but it covered a multitude of leaden virtues.

After a time the boats, approaching shallower water, stopped, discharging volleys of artillery aimed so high that they cut the upper branches of the adjacent trees. The regulars landed leisurely to

secure the stores, still far up the creek. Their glittering garb made a grand target in the dim woods.

It was the old story. Englishmen may never hope to cope with the Yankees in forest warfare. The British are born in the open. Generations of Indian fighting have taught the new world settlers the excellence, to a reasonable extent, of the redskins' methods.

No sooner were they in the forest than the British were bewildered by a hail of death that poured from rifle barrels unseen. They replied at random, only beholding in response dim, gray shapes flitting like shadows from tree to tree, too swift for shots. The fire came again, this time on the flank, now in front, next from behind. It was perplexing. It was more; it was mortality. Men lay writhing in agony, their brave coats wet with a deeper red, and still their comrades fell, mowed down by the enemy the more terrible because unseen. And in this unique battling, so incomprehensible and so destructive to the gallant enemy, the plowboy and the tavern keeper were equally at home with Appling's unerring riflemen, for marksmanship with us was a religion and a matter of course in those days. None of us but spent his spare hours ranging the forest for its game, and the brave red coat made a better mark among those trees than the soberer one of a buck or bear. So it was that death and agony leapt from the muzzles, while those who dealt them went nearly unscathed, because of flitting like incorporate shades from point to point of the screening foliage.

And tireless among the victors that day were the three old musketeers, John's musketeer and mine.

And, by a strange trick of fate, two of them nearly achieved a flitting, from which impending end they were rescued by the third.

The three had been skulking about like Indians and doing great service, for not one of them but was a crack shot. Cyrenus was fighting for the pure love of the game; Noadiah in the line of a virtuous duty to be done; Abner, with waggling jaws and funereal countenance, with an air of solemn resignation; just as he went to church with Betsey, because she did. But Abner was full as good a shot as any, though why and how he had compassed his skill was always a puzzle to me. For he was ambitionless in most things, and marksmanship is an art that requires much application and the exercise of patience to acquire. But his dolorous, impersonal eye overlooked nothing in the shape of a splotch of red. By and by, that eye, deceivingly surveillant, saved two patriots for future service.

The enemy had a detachment of red allies with them that day, which, though small, did more service than the king's regulars because used to that style of fighting. I caught fleeting glimpses of their tawny hides from time to time, they reminding me intimately of a precious brood I knew, though I was quite sure that if they were indeed members of that band, their evil leader was not with them, since I had information that he was in Frontenac on other business. At any rate, stepping swiftly from behind a tree after a shot, I came simultaneously upon an open space and a thrilling tableau.

Cyrenus and Noadiah, engrossed in the grim business of the day and evidently unaware of one another's presence, though within a few paces of

each other, bent forward with rifles ready, searching through the trees for a favorable shot. And behind them, creeping up silently as deadly serpents, were two of the enemy's tawny allies, part of a number who had gained our rear and were stalking us at our own game. Their hands held knives, quite as effective in the back and more so, in fact, than in front with veterans like these. The sudden sight paralyzed me for a brief instant—and then—

Before I could cry out or leap to the rescue of the two warriors, and even as the knives were raised in readiness for the two Indians' forward tigerish spring, a shot rang out from a nearby clump of bushes and one Indian tumbled, with a death yell, fairly over the kneeling Cyrenus, crushing the little man to earth beneath his impact. Almost simultaneously with the shot a gaunt form bounded like a deer out of the brush, with smoking rifle clubbed over his shoulder. The rescuer landed just behind the second Indian, he who was to have finished Noadiah. The rifle butt came crashing down upon the redskin's greasy skull and he was finished rather than Noadiah, who whirled ponderously to confront Abner, still with a visage of the tombs and whose jaws paused not nor wavered in their eternal allegiance to the relished weed. The flustered Cyrenus, emerging with sundry cursings from beneath the other departed Indian, scrambled to his feet. The three regarded each other in eloquent silence.

"Betsey'd say it war the Lord," wailed Abner. "She'd lay it to Him, all of it. But I'd lay a good sher of it to the bar'l of this here rifle and another good sher to the butt. There's credit enough to go all around, sech as it is. But there hain't much

satisfaction in savin' a couple o' yer comrades as don't speak to other."

Cyrenus and Noadiah noticed the close proximity of one another for the first time and moved apart. Noadiah drew himself up ponderously. Cyrenus regarded him with a sour smile.

"If you two would speak to each other an' be rekernciled," remarked Abner, in passionless parlance, "it would, to a sartin extent, make it up to me fer goin' to this trouble for yeh. It's mighty onpleasant——"

"For what you hev done, Abner," acknowledged Noadiah, with pompous humility, "may the Lord make me trooly thankful. I'm not speakin' fer him," with a contemptuous indication of the grinning Cyrenus. "There's some things——"

"There's some things worse than stayin' a widow," interrupted Cyrenus pointedly. "Becomin' a wife again, for instance. Maybe this outcome ain't altogether an unmixed blessing of the Lord's for some parties. The way it's come out in some quarters, maybe there'll be a future wife in place of a present widow. And in such case I'm sorry for her. The Lord might better have fixed it so she could stick to her widowhood."

The face of Noadiah grew turkey red and he glared ferociously. But firing sounded further on, toward the creek, and the enemies seized their rifles and hurried away in diverging directions.

"Won't rekerncile!" groaned Abner, as we hurried after them. "Ain't it damnable?"

And I agreed that it was.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE ROPE JOB

Now the whoops of savages other than their own came to the ears of the British, for the American forces were aided by a few redskins favorable to our side on that memorable day, and, though they arrived late, they assisted in contributing to the general discomfiture of the enemy. Almost simultaneously with their appearance came the cheers from additional reinforcements of militia from Sackets Harbor and Ellisburgh, crashing through the woods. It was too much. The British, until now fighting with the courage of despair, wavered, broke and ran. We pursued, overtaking many of them. Some threw down their muskets, begging frantically for quarter. John, of whom I had seen little during the engagement, in which, following the tactics of forest warfare, each man pursued the independent tenor of his woodland way, now joined me as I hurried on with others in pursuit of our flying foes. Suddenly he uttered an imprecation and rushed toward the right. I followed.

In a clearing, near the creek bank, three of our own Indian allies, in whom the savage blood was asserting itself, were pleasantly engaged in scalping a pair of shrieking British prisoners. John dashed into the midst of that sanguinary trio like a devastating cyclone. I followed in his wake, but there

was no need for my assistance. By the time I reached there two of the red allies were rolling in agony on the ground and the third was invisible. A stirring in some adjacent bushes revealed the spot where John had thrown him.

"Devils!" growled the giant, with smouldering eyes. "It is a burning shame that any government should countenance the employing of such serpents in civilized warfare!"

We summoned aid for the two suffering Englishmen and passed on. The affair at arms was now over, and though destined to be practically unrecorded, it was one of the most signal victories for American arms during the war, and was, moreover, an engagement in which the British failed absolutely to gain their object, except in the capture of the single transport before the battle, which I have mentioned. Those who escaped could not make haste enough to rejoin their comrades on shipboard and get out of the creek. Had our force been larger and had Chauncey been there we could doubtless have captured the British fleet. As it was, we had taken many prisoners, bringing them to Sackets Harbor. No further attempt was made by the enemy to secure the stores, the fleet leaving shortly to blockade Sackets Harbor.

This brings me to a unique incident in connection with this affair, one that tradition is handing down as the "rope job." Among the stores in the transports were two cables for the new frigate Superior which were twenty inches in diameter and weighed four tons apiece. One of these cables was loaded on several carts, attached one to the other, and drawn by relays of oxen to the Harbor. All the oxen, horses and wagons in the thinly settled region were pressed into service for the conveying of the guns

and stores to the Harbor. By the hardest of work, everything was on the road by the Thursday afternoon following the battle except one of these giant cables. There was but one wagon left. How to get the great rope to the village was a problem. A number of men stood about, eyeing it with helpless head scratchings and earnest curses. John stood with them, surveying the cable thoughtfully. At last he threw up a hand, bringing the great palm down upon the shoulder of a man standing near him with such force as nearly to knock him over, though he was substantial enough.

"I have it, men!" exclaimed the 'big un,'" as they appreciatively called him. "It's up to us to make useful beasts of burden of ourselves." And he rapidly explained his plan. It was quickly put in operation.

There was but one wagon left. Three pairs of oxen were attached to it. Part of the cable was loaded upon this wagon and a crowd of men, having made mats of plaited grass for their shoulders, walked behind the cart in Indian file, staggering under the weight of the great rope that stretched, like a long, Gargantuan serpent, back into the dim greenness of the woods. Finally the men laid down their burden, sleeping that night in Ellis village.

The next day the bearers of the strange burden made about eight miles, being fed and lodged most comfortably by the residents of the small settlements where we stopped. There were constantly a hundred men at the task, working in relays. New volunteers were constantly arriving and old ones dropping out, for most could not stand the strain for long.

But one man there was who stood out a giant

in the task, and it was John. He had insisted on joining in the work from the beginning, and he was the only man who could keep at it, unrelieved, for the entire day. It was not bravado. It was simply the man's wonderful might and endurance, which never tired. I saw the strong men of the northland, and there were giants in those days, try to emulate him, and, ere the day was half spent, be forced to stop exhausted, with white faces and shaking knees, to give place to others. As for him, he strode on like a Titan, his back straight, the great coil seeming to rest like a packing cord on his brawny shoulder. From time to time he shifted the weight to the other shoulder, easily as if casting a pebble. And when the night came he seemed the freshest of us all.

On Saturday the cable was taken through from Smithville to the Harbor, a distance of ten miles. As we approached the end of our journey, some of the men fell out, exhausted, but there were volunteers in plenty to take the vacant places. As we approached the village there came the crash of bands, the shrill note of the fife, the roll of drums, the boom of saluting artillery. The soldiery and the citizens came thronging to meet us. The oxen were stopped and unyoked, the cable was hauled from the cart by swarms of clutching, straining hands. Hundreds ducked under the great rope to rise erect with a section of it upon a shoulder. Now there were as many men under it as could congregate in a single file lockstep, and we hobbledy-pegged it into the village, all the din of the general exultation in our deafened ears. We passed through the main street of the village, up a narrow lane that was hedged on either side by cheering multitudes,

for the garrison was emptied of its soldiers and the countryside for miles around was there. With the hoarse shouts of the men there sounded the treble of the women; everywhere there fluttered white shreds of handkerchiefs. Something drew my gaze. Turning my head, I saw her, with shining eyes, standing with Dorothy, both waving handkerchiefs in welcome.

We gained the shipyards, and, amid a tumult of shouting, threw the great rope down before the sailors. Flags waved, the cheering grew madder, the bearers were lifted upon the shoulders of shouting friends. It was a memorable day.

The Superior, which had been waiting for this cable, was now soon equipped. With its appearance, Yeo, who had been blockading the port without daring to enter it,—true to the dictates of caution which actuated him in as full measure as they did his opponent,—made haste to sail away.

CHAPTER XXX

A WANDERER'S RETURN

Together John and I strolled idly along the road that led, following the shore of the bay, away from the village to a point a mile above, where were located the humble huts of some fisher folk. July, approaching its end and loath to leave, had reveled that day in the warmth of an impassioned sun. But the wide water yawned in the west to receive the riotous, red orb, now reluctantly sinking toward the shimmering flood, flaunting the while his banners of crimson and gold in fond adieu to the departing day. Adjacent thickets awoke in a world of shrill peepings and mystic murmurings; above burred the whir of wings, for the birds were hastening home. Down in the marshes, in deep profundo, outrolled the vespers of the frogs; far off in the dim woods that stretched nearby there woke the weird curfew of a whippoorwill. And close at hand the hesitant twilight hovered, reluctant to approach, while the glow of the dying sunlight rested, regally departing, upon resplendent waters and the transfigured land.

About us, a pup still in heart despite his years and grim life's score, roamed the formidable Gypso, snuffing busily and exploring odd thickets; burrowing occasionally in the hole of a woodchuck, or maybe something more virile, to reappear in a moment with black face well begrimed, requiring

vigorous application of his forepaws. He was fastidious for a dog. Occasionally he leaped upon us, muttering low growls of canine satisfaction, then was off upon some fresh exploration. John watched him thoughtfully as we sauntered on, enjoying the gathering coolness after a toilsome day.

"He's growing old, Gilbert," said John, sadness in his manner. "You don't notice it much, for the pup spirit stirs in him as you see. But his eye is dimming a little and the hairs about his mouth are growing gray. Time is gradual in its processes, but it is also inevitable. By and by he will be but a slippered canine pantaloon, lying toothless and old and blind before the fireplace, shivering and whining in wistful dreams of the deeds of a gallant past. And it is a gallant past, Gilbert, a brave story from the day I bought him, a pudgy puppy, from a settler away in the forest near Champlain. Why, even then he would struggle, if imposed upon, to fight a pup twice his size, just as he would unhesitatingly tackle a wood cat to-day, should I give him the word. And it would be rough on the cat. What tales he might tell if he could!" the giant's black eyes kindling, "but cannot, since his Maker denied him that gift of speech which He bestowed upon us inferior animals! Inferior? Yes, in all that goes to make that noblest of virtues, supreme fidelity! Since the day when he first looked into my face and loved me, as I bore him on my arm into the forest, my will has been his, my way his. It has often led into the paths of death, but he has never faltered. Yes, he has often led the way into them and pulled me out of them afterward. He has stood guard, sleepless and weary, by a dying

fire in the forest, menacing the beasts away while I slept exhausted. His body bears the scars of wounds from brutes and men incurred in my interest; side by side we have borne the brunt of years. And from the beginning," and John's voice was very tender, "he has never failed me, never doubted me. He has worshiped me, for to him I am God! Can you and I, boy, claim such an allegiance to our Maker? Rather, can we look upon the poor, dumb brute without feeling a deep shame? I have known many men, and, speaking generally, the knowledge has largely increased my respect for dogs. And Gypso there has grown very near to me. It saddens me to think, for such are the relative spans of merciless nature, that but a few years more and he will, in the natural order of things, turn his sightless eyes upon me at the sound of my voice in the darkness and moan with the pain in his stiffened limbs as he licks my pitying hand. And when he goes yonder my heart will ache for him even, as I well know, should fate take me first, the big, honest heart of him will ache for me in the loneliness of his old age. Old age! I doubt not that, if he could know and apprehend it, he would wish, even as I, to fall in strength and the fulness of his power, rather than to totter in weakness to the brink of the grave, to finally tumble in, a toothless, senile wreck! And to think that this, the final irony, is for what so many pray!"

He was standing silent, hat in hand, gazing out upon the unquiet bay, for a whimsical breeze had strengthened with the sunset, blowing from the south, the sky being clear of clouds. Moved by his strange outburst, a rare thing with him, I

surveyed his great figure with its powerful shoulders, every line eloquent with virile grace and surpassing might. I marked his strong, earnest face, the heavy beard and the luxuriant hair, black as jet, crowning the splendid head. Surely time's ravages and the shadow of death seemed far removed from him! Yet I thought with an ache at my heart of the coming time; of the crumbling breath of a generation gone; of the havoc of swift-flown years. Ah, poor, ephemeral clay that disintegrates in dust; the mounds in the churchyard decked with flowers by withered hands while youth whistles carelessly upon the highway!

The last glow of the descended sun had died in the faint, slowly gathering dusk. Near to us, close to the shore of the bay—at this point cleared of encroaching timber—was a, squat, mean hovel wearing an unmistakable air of neglect. Its barred doors and windows bespoke an absent tenant. In an adjacent shallow cove were a couple of ruinous old sailboats, half submerged in the water. A small dory idled on the beach near the hut.

John indicated the place with a dry laugh. "If Miles Osgood doesn't return soon to look after his property, there will be occasion for an inquest," he remarked. "We might confiscate it, but it is hardly worth the trouble. We might have taken the boats yonder, but didn't think of it, and it looks now as if the winter's ice had done for them."

"As we will do for Miles if he should return," said I. "I am sorry he is not in chancery. He is entirely untrustworthy. What Carew and Beresford told me during that involuntary sail of mine to Frontenac with them merely confirmed some suspicions I had. You remember the search we made

for him as soon as I returned, but he had disappeared for parts unknown. Perhaps it is as well. We want no double-dealers on this side of the water, and a man who furnishes boats to his friends, the enemy, certainly belongs to that category. I regret that we could not find him, for I would like to assure myself that he is not engaged in similar pursuits somewhere along the border. Assurance would be more satisfactory if he were locked up. He is a dangerous man to have anywhere in the open. And if he were about, to find that I wear two names, it might be awkward."

"True," replied John. "Still, do you think he left because he feared his dealings had been discovered?"

"I hardly think so," I rejoined. "There was no definite suspicion against him, outside a very small circle, as you know, till Carew's talk with me confirmed what impressions we had and more. But when I returned, ready to act, I found him already gone. He could not have known. And no one has seen him anywhere in this region since."

"He may have gone voyaging, on a sudden whim," returned John carelessly. "I understand he used to be a sailor. What does it matter where he is? We're well rid of him anyway."

"We are if we are," I commented. "I would feel better if I knew surely that he were dead."

There sounded a loud report from a thicket across the road. A jet of smoke curled above it. I had torn off my hat, agape, and was staring stupidly at it. I can remember reflecting confusedly that it was ruined, though new, for a bullet had passed through the crown.

There was a great crashing through the opposite underbrush. John was half across the road, making for the thicket with flying impetus. I hurried after him, plunging in. Low growls sounded nearby, and now there arose a yell of terror. I forged ahead, to burst in upon a startling tableau.

Prostrate upon the ground sprawled no other a personage than Miles Osgood, with livid face and eyes protruding with horror. Over him, with bristling hair and terrible jaws not a half inch from his throat stood the big, black hound, awaiting only the word to throttle the groveling villain. John stood by the two, grinning appreciatively.

"Thought you'd pick off one of us, at least, did you, Miles?" he asked pleasantly. "Didn't see the dog, did you? But he saw you. How do you like him?"

"Take him away, for Gawd's sake!" quavered the wretch, shaking like a wind-stirred leaf. And, indeed, the sight of the huge brute's glaring eyes and cruel, exposed fangs was passably unnerving.

"Come here, Gypso," ordered John briefly. And then he unceremoniously collared the cowering Osgood and jerked him gasping to his feet. The menace of the hound having been removed, the fellow faced us with some restoration of his poise and a species of sullen bravado. Of medium height, squarely built and with spreading shoulders, he possessed a low browed, venomous face, with a stubble of reddish beard. He was evidently about fifty.

"And now," remarked John quietly, "give an account of yourself. Where have you been, why did you leave there and why do you return here? And

finally, why did you shoot at Captain Warburton just now?"

"I had a good chance to go down state on a payin' job," replied the fellow sulkily, "and I went. I jest got back. I hearn you two talkin' and waited for you to go on. And when I hearn him a-wishin' I was dead," with increased bravado, "I thought as how it mout be all right for to try my hand at makin' him so himself."

"Ah, you did, did you?" commented John, his eyes unnaturally bright in the creeping dusk. "Seems strange you found it necessary to remain in hiding till we passed on. Moreover, you have no right, considering your general cut, to object to anyone wishing you dead. And, while we're about this, perhaps you'll tell us something about those little deals of yours before you left here, of renting boats to British spies."

"I don't know nothin' about——" began Osgood unblushingly, but he got no further. John had stepped forward, placing a mighty hand firmly about Miles' windpipe, with an earnest and increasing pressure. The fellow's tongue protruded, his eyes bulged; his face crimsoned, then empurpled; his hands tore fruitlessly at the iron fingers at his throat. A moment so, and then the giant flung him, a writhing, gasping heap, upon the ground. John was white to the lips with anger.

"You cursed assassin!" he snarled. "You lie in every word, you Judas! We know nothing of you since you left here, but I'll wager you've been in some devil's business, and we'll find out what it is! And while we're finding out you'll be kept safe for future reference. Come on, Gilbert!" And he hauled the dazed, half throttled ruffian to his feet

and dragged him to the roadway, Gypso acting as rear guard. I stopped to pick up Osgood's gun, which he had dropped when overtaken by the dog, and followed.

That night Miles was locked up at the Harbor, and, the next morning, was sent a prisoner to Watertown.

CHAPTER XXXI

WHEN WOMEN DARE

My mare, uneasy at my side, rolled a reproachful eye at me and pawed impatiently. "Hold, girl," I admonished severely. "She is but horseflesh," I added apologetically, "and fears a battery, even though it be but that of your eyes, mam'selle, to say nothing of the round and childish ones of my sister."

"Merci, m'sieur," curtsied Renee, raking me at short range with a blue-green broadside, "though I may not speak for your sister. Indeed, I gather that she can well speak for herself. Look directly to be quashed, m'sieur. You have dared."

Dorothy, standing near by with John, who cheerfully awaited my undoing, surveyed me with eyes in which the round and childish effect was intensified. Always a danger signal, it foretold annihilation. I braced.

"There is a calf at the barn," she said sweetly, "such a cunning calf. It is a week old. But let us remain here. Gillie is fully as diverting."

Sans sympathy from John, I followed his example and mounted. We rode away from the house with the damsel's mocking laughter in our ears, especially my own. The twilight was falling, for, absorbed in a task at the barracks, John had

deferred till nightfall starting upon a mission of a few days at some of the river ports. It was the evening following the capture of Miles Osgood. The weather remained perfect and there was a clear field of sky awaiting the candle-light of the stars and the round globe of the moon. I had arranged to ride with John as far as Watertown, where he was to put up that night preparatory to proceeding the next day. My mare needed exercise and I purposed to pass the evening there with John and return later by moonlight.

We rode on toward the village, lazily enjoying the coolness that came with the deepening dusk. The good brutes under us, freed from the stable that, through stress of circumstances, had been a prison of late, pressed on in an exhilarating gallop. Presently we tried to ease them, but they rebelled and we let them go. Whimsical as women, they shied at shadows on the familiar road, snorted suspiciously at the cynical hootings of ennuied owls. We sped on under the flowering stars, along the dim, weird way that stretched its ghostly length interminably ahead, between solemn woodland walls that gave forth incense of balsam and of pine. It was not long ere the lights of the village, as we breasted a hill, twinkled ahead. We were soon there. Proceeding up Columbia Street we left our horses at a convenient stable and went to the arsenal. There we spent the evening with some congenial friends. Under the benign influence of good cheer and generous potations of old ale, we became raconteurs. After a while one of John's rare reminiscent moods asserted itself, and till it ceased, we listened silently, hanging upon every word. For he had lived life to the full in this wild

wilderness of his adoption, and his words transported us whither he willed. For all too brief a time the mood endured, and when he had done and became but a listener to others, I bethought myself that it was time to be starting homeward. So, with a parting word to John and the group, I quitted them, and, regaining my mare, set forth at a leisurely pace for the Harbor.

The moon had risen, showering its ripe, matured beauty upon the quiet world. It lacked yet two hours of midnight. I rode out of the settlement upon the lonely, wood-fringed highway that led Harborward. There were weird silences, broken now and then by the strange cry of some prowling animal of night or the dismal hoot of one of Minerva's minions. My mare, less restive now, proceeded at a more reasonable pace. I rode dreamily on, my thoughts afar. The rein idled on the mare's neck. She picked her paces, sans any heed of mine. Before I realized it the village showed in the moonlight a bare half mile ahead. The mare, which had been ambling gently, lapsed into a leisurely walk as we mounted a small hill. At the crest I noted a figure, unmistakable in the moon's glow, approaching without haste and with a listless shamble. A melancholy face, equipped with grinding jaws, looked up into my own as we mutually paused.

"Evenin', cap'n," wailed a dirge of a voice.

"Same, Abner," responded I. "What's up?"

He shifted his quid. "Nothin' much," he averred, "only I 'lowed as how you mout be gittin' back from Wat'town village 'bout now and mout like to know as how ther's a mawb surroundin' of your house."

"My house!" I exclaimed. "But why? Speak, man, can't you?"

"I am speakin'," he drawled in a funeral procession of creeping words. "I hearn as how they're after a suspishis character they think the girls has hid there. The girls, they was a standin' of 'em off when I left. for your father ain't right smart, you know. The girls 'lowed I mout meet you, which I hev."

I dug my heels into the sides of my startled mare and was off at full speed down the highway. Turning upon the main street, I urged her the faster and was soon at the house, facing the battle ground and the bay beyond. Before my home swarmed an agitated assemblage of marines, sailors and militiamen. Low murmurs sounded as I dashed up. I threw myself from the mare at the stable door and made my way unnoticed toward the group in the yard. Some one yelled a hoarse defiance at the moment and the crowd pressed forward.

"Cowards!" cried a voice, sweet as bells, yet ringing with defiance. "Ciel! We are women! As you are men, stand back!"

A stirring picture, truly, as I hastened toward the gathering, which ebbed irresolutely before my lady's stinging words. She stood with Dorothy upon the broad veranda, each the incarnation, bathed in moonbeams, of superb defiance; the poise of each alive with that regnant, fearless spirit, inherent in some rare women, that braves the brunt of most formidable menace and cows the sons of men.

In a moment I was among them, shouldering them out of my way as I hurried across the yard

to the veranda. Gaining it, I turned, facing them furiously beside the two girls.

"Now then, you hounds!" I demanded angrily, "what is your business here? What is the meaning of this?"

"It means, Gilbert," put in the irrepressible Dorothy, "that they haven't the countersign and they can't get in."

There were murmurs from the men. "We want that stranger, cap'n," called out someone. "We almost had him nabbed an hour ago, and he got away. There's them as seen them ladies hidin' him in this house. We came for to search for him, as is our duty, and the girls stopped us."

I laughed, "It looks so," I commented. "Is there a single officer among you? Have you received orders from anyone to take this course?"

There was silence. "Then get back to your quarters," I commanded sternly, "and let us have an end of this wretched business. It is not the mission of men to try to cow women!"

Some moved irresolutely away, but others stood sulkily by. "We want that stranger!" muttered one fellow sullenly.

"You may have him!" announced a voice from the doorway, and into the veranda stepped a tall, old man in the dress of a trapper. Renee gasped as Dorothy uttered a low exclamation. "I regret having occasioned you so much trouble," said the stranger courteously, addressing them, "and must firmly decline to cause you more. "Since these gentlemen," indicating the now triumphant group, "knew that your kindness had harbored me, there is nothing gained by remaining save your further embarrassment, and that I cannot permit."

The tones of his voice, the look of his face, though seamed with the lines of age; both were eloquent of another, a younger man. Like a flash I had divined the situation. In the hope of meeting the younger the elder had dared this thing, arriving this very evening only to find John gone. Then, when suspicion had been aroused and investigation inaugurated, for the suspicious saw spies in every bush in those stirring days, chance had led him to encounter Renee, as I learned later. She recognized him readily in his slight disguise, and, greeting him warmly, soon learned of his plight, for he had found that he was being hounded. A word from Renee to Dorothy sufficed, for my sister had often heard of Renee's deliverer at Frontenac. The damsels had undertaken the custody of Major Basil Aberdeen, of His Majesty's service, with what result has been told. Now he offered himself to the gaolers. At the least a prison yawned for him. The faces of the girls were eloquent of hope deceased.

But now an inspiration flashed into my brain. That dual role of mine! What possibilities did it not contan! It had deceived the enemy; it must now deceive my friends. But I must compass it without allowing the disguised officer to suspect my double identity.

I laughed. "Well, this is a pretty comedy, men," I said in a bantering tone. "You all know me, some of you know me well. My friend here is upon a mission of peace. He will leave in the morning—and, mind you, he will leave unmolested, else you will hear from your superiors! You will go to your quarters and at once! I will personally report regarding this matter tomorow." I waved

my hand in careless dismissal and conducted our unexpected guest, who looked somewhat bewildered over the sudden turn of affairs, into the house, leaving the crowd to go muttering to quarters. The girls were overjoyed, having shrewdly suspected my plan with my announcement, though they were silent, for they were well cognizant of the risk I ran.

Renee did not learn of the major's true errand to the Harbor when she devised the plan of secreting him in the house. She did not care to know it. It was enough that the man who had delivered her across the border from a terrible, impending fate stood now in need of succor for himself. She knew nothing of the relationship between him and John at the time, for I had of course observed John's confidence. It was long afterward that she learned that the episode occurred through the attempt of a broken hearted father to meet a long absent son.

Early in the morning, having arranged matters with Major Aberdeen, I sailed his boat, in which he had come the previous day from Frontenac in company with a discreet boatman, to a point three miles above the Harbor. There the officer and his boatman, who had not been in evidence the preceding night with its disconcerting events, met me and I saw them safely started for Frontenac. He was earnestly appreciative of my efforts, though I could see that he wondered at the influence which I apparently possessed with the powers that were. As for me, when he had gotten safely away, I reported the occurrence at headquarters simply as an addition to the stirring experiences I had passed through in the role of Stranahan in the line of

communication with the opposite side by messengers. So the impression obtained that the major was an emissary who had borne messages of mine to Frontenac to forward to Montreal. The messenger was supposed to have derived the impression that I was but a lodger, under an assumed name, in my own home, and, as I explained, those of my household had been very careful not to disturb this impression. For my part, I was assumed to have severely rebuked the messenger for yielding to impulse and nearly exposing my hidden hand and to have sent him away feeling that I had succeeded in smoothing matters by restoring the shaken impression that he was what he seemed to be, a simple trapper, bound for the western part of the state.

I told John of the matter upon his return, before the rest had an opportunity to thrust his father's name upon him unawares. "Had you been here——" I ventured.

"It is as well as it is," he answered, his dark face sombre. "The past is dead. It is a ghoulish thing to violate a grave."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE NARROWS

Mine host Nehemiah Wharton, lord of Watertown's chief tavern, and of Dame Wharton and the bevy of little Whartons besides, was talking, or rather whirring. His distressing bronchial affection was responsible. It made me nervous. He whirred of the war, of consequent hard times. It grew intolerable. I drained my mug and set it down, rising.

"I must be starting, Nehemiah," said I. "Nearly star-time." He looked sincere regret. His little eyes involuntarily swept over the interior of the tap room, all but untenanted, where of yore a comfortable, dram-loving horde held sway on each prosperous night. Now most of them were at the front. To-night, besides myself, the room held but a dispirited trio, who sat silent, moodily inspecting their boots. They were not buying, had not wherewith to buy. I had supped generously, drammed sparingly. My mare munched in Nehemiah's stable. I was a godsend, to say nothing of the mare.

I emerged into the gathering night, nearly falling over a couple of little Whartons wrangling in the doorway. Nehemiah, following, separated them with a pair of paternal cuffs. They disappeared with two squalls that were as one. Wharton, who,

in these degenerate days, was now his own stableman, went for my horse while I lighted a cigar and idly gazed out over the broad plaza.

The mare brought, I paid my reckoning, which Nehemiah clutched convulsively, and mounted. There was a shrill babel from the street and a rush toward us of scurrying small forms. My mare shied and reared, narrowly escaping trampling a deluge of additional young Whartons. Nehemiah swooped down upon them, as I steadied the mare, and there arose discordant wails of lamentation.

I turned my head. The substantial form of Dame Wharton, attracted by the din, filled the lighted doorway, shrilling admonitions. The wails increased in volume.

"For all that Nehemiah has received," I murmured to the mare, "may the Lord make him truly thankful, if He can."

Turning from the plaza, I passed down the street. The settlement was young, but I noted there were already a few stones, gray in the gathering dusk, sprinkled here and there in an adjacent churchyard. I clattered across the bridge, gaining the north bank of the Kahuahgo and proceeding at an easy trot along the highway that led to Brown's Settlement, christened for my favorite old commander. The dusk deepened densely into night; the stars, winking awake, grew gradually wide-eyed and radiant. Fireflies, tiny acolytes of the August night, glowed fitfully here, now there. By and by a bend in the road brought me close to the black, swirling Kahuahgo. Grimly sullen, it rolled beneath the stars, the channel studded thickly with huge boulders, about which hissed the foaming waters, for it was shallow here. Presently the

road led away from the bank and I heard from a distance the faint murmur of the river's flow.

Proceeding leisurely the four miles to Brown's Settlement, I put the mare in the tavern stable, and, avoiding observation, walked unobtrusively through the village and into the woods below it. I proceeded a half mile down the river bank, upon which the young settlement was located, following a rude path that had lately been but little used. Finally I emerged into a clearing of generous size, fronting directly upon the river's edge. I could hear the stream's faint growl far below me, for, some distance above this spot, the Kahuahgo narrowed and defiled between unbroken twin walls of rock, full fifty feet in height, for a matter of three miles, the river broadening and spreading over lower land for the remaining two miles that intervened before it mingled its waters with the wide flood of Ontario. This stretch of rocky walls was called the Narrows by the settlers.

In the center of the clearing where I stood were the unfinished walls of a log cabin, which a solitary settler had begun to erect some years before, but had died when the building had only begun to assume the definite lines of an intended habitation. No one had built near the place. Other newcomers, more gregarious than the poor chap who had met his fate here, had preferred to settle nearer each other in the village above. The full moon had now risen, bathing the clearing in white, spectral radiance. About the unfinished walls of the cabin curled and twisted, in serpentine coilings, the luxuriant meshes of wild vines; a rank growth of verdure protruded from between the chinks of the stark, dead logs. Beneath my feet, in the mold of

the cleared space, so laboriously redeemed by now resting hands, rioted untrammeled nature, again triumphant, in a renewed jumble of lush grass, bush and bramble. I sighed. Such the sum of human effort. The quickened dust that strives, till, helpless and done, it lies mouldering in the quiet darkness, while the works it wrought in its fleeting day crumble in their turn to keep it company in the shrouding night. And the heart of the world throbs on and a century soon rolls, a single crested wave in the ocean of illimitable eternity, over the dust that slumbers and the poor little tasks it performed before it fell asleep. And what is left? Toil entombed, the shadow of a dream; the puny finite swallowed in the infinite; dust of yesteryears that is the sport of warring winds; winds that wail for the sum of dead ages, crowded and innumerable; that sigh for the buried triumphs of a century past, even as they mourn for the vanished glory that was Rome!

A stealthy step, close at hand, broke my brief reverie. I turned. A man, in rough garb, the brim of a battered hat drawn well down over his face, was moving cautiously toward me. As I faced him he wheeled to withdraw again into the forest. Undoubtedly the messenger I expected from Frontenac.

"Wait!" I called guardedly. "It is all right. Come back here!" He halted, irresolute, as I approached him.

"One cannot be too careful," I murmured low. "especially Lieutenant Stranahan upon these shores. It is strange that I have not come to grief long before now."

He nodded silently. "This rendezvous seemed

safer than some we have picked previously," I commented. "It was getting too hot about the larger settlements. But," looking at him more closely, "you are not the man I expected. A new one, eh?"

"No, he's in other business," answered my envoy gruffly. "So I'm here."

"Good!" I answered, though there was a familiar ring in the voice that perplexed and disturbed me. "And now," indicating an inner pocket, "conceal these despatches which I will give you, regain the north shore of the St. Lawrence and see that the papers reach Montreal with expedition. They are important." I fumbled for the despatches.

"All right, cap'n," responded the fellow, a covert sneer in the tone. That word and in that tone! I faced him, rigid.

"Ah, you know!" I breathed. "And you—you are not the messenger at all! Who are you?" With a quick spring forward I snatched the enshrouding hat from his head. An evil, malignant face confronted me, the face of Miles Osgood!

"So," I exclaimed, "you have escaped, When?"

"Only to-night, cap'n," he replied with bravado. "I was thar long enough," with a wicked leer.

"You were following me?" I questioned. "For what, to murder me? Stab in the back probably. You were approaching without noise."

"Accident," he answered. "I was makin' my way back to my own place. Was curious to see who was standin' here."

"You lie!" I retorted hotly. "You know my secret! You meant either to finish me here, or, if you did not secure the chance, to betray me across the water yonder! You are a black-hearted, treacherous dog! But I've got you, and back to

prison you'll go and I will take you there!" My hand sought a pistol.

Ere I could draw it, with the suddenness of a panther he sprang upon me. I reeled back under his weight, while he sought desperately to trip and throw me. Though somewhat old he was a powerful man and I saw that I had a formidable proposition on my hands. Pulling myself together, I stepped out of a cleverly attempted leglock, and jamming a forearm against his throat, bore him savagely backward over my other arm. He gasped once, then slipped out like an eel and I found my hands full of him again. He was no indifferent wrestler. Locked in close embrace, we plunged about the clearing, trampling the grasses, tripping over twisted roots and stumpage, working for an effective hold. A moment more without advantage to either, a desperate wrestle on a narrow, rocky ledge; a futile effort to maintain a precarious balance; a sudden common fall sideways and outward, and, with a sickening breathless whirl, we were plunging, still locked together, toward the black water of the Kahuahgo, fifty feet below.

The water is deep at this point for the full width of the stream, and we had fallen well out, else I had not been here to tell this tale nor ever possessed descendants to hear it. When we tumbled from the ledge we were inseparable, and in fraternal embrace we reached the water heads foremost. With the cold impact of the stream our mutual grasp instinctively loosened and we parted company as the swift tide enveloped us. I rose breathless to the surface. Striking out mechanically, while the swift, black current bore me down stream, I looked about for my companion. The end of a huge tree

trunk, evidently lately uprooted by the stream, which had been high that season, came sweeping down, appearing close to my shoulder. Simultaneously there was a soft, sinister thud, followed by a deep groan. I noted the occasion. The trunk had come in contact with a dark object that appeared trying to forge up stream.

In an instant I was lying on my stomach over the great trunk, reaching into the water with both hands. Their search was rewarded, for they were immediately enmeshed in a thick, soaked mat of hair. I hung on while I threw a leg awkwardly over the floating tree and sprawled myself along it. Then, with infinite labor, I managed to drag my recent enemy, whom I judged to be half drowned, aboard the nondescript craft. Blood trickled from the side of his head; his face was ghastly in the moonlight. At the cost of some effort I succeeded in disposing of him comfortably farther back among some branches and left him there to revive.

Far back, as we drifted silently down the black river, between the high, hemming walls, I marked the spot, higher than the rest, from which we had taken the frightful tumble. As I looked, the figure of a man, of indistinguishable description at that distance, appeared for a moment on the brink of the cliff. Undoubtedly the messenger, reflected I. He looked about for a moment, but could not see us, who had now drifted into the shadow near the shore. It would do no good now to attract his attention so I did not try. Presently he disappeared.

We drifted silently down the stream, under the white moon, the river murmuring mysteriously, lapping the rocky cliffs that formed its shores. There was the occasional splash of a fish at play.

Weird night sounds stirred from the wooded heights above, interspersed with quiet intervals, brooding with a solemn hush. Sometimes the great tree swung toward the adjacent cliff, a branch or root catching for a moment in some crevice, but the insistent current always laid hold upon and swung it inexorably down toward the broader water below. I called to the silent man near me, but he did not answer. Must have had a hard knock I surmised, which was perhaps as well for me.

A little longer and the great cliffs gave place to low, green wooded shores, as the river widened below the Narrows into a broader, more tranquil current. We drifted on the log out of the shadows into the wider, moonlit water. I purposed to make the shore below and proceed to the little settlement at Fish Island. I glanced down stream and immediately raised my voice in a loud halloo.

Far out, seated in a punt, was a lone fisherman. Of his occupation there was no doubt as he was jerking a fish from the water as I spied him. In obedience to my call he turned, weighed anchor and started toward me. He drew alongside. A shrewd, puckered face was turned toward me.

"Cyrenus, by all that's holy!" I exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

He grinned. "Things are slack at the Harbor," said he. "Got three days' leave to fish. I like fishin' and you can get 'em here."

"Glad you're on hand," I acknowledged. "It's convenient for me.' I indicated my companion. "Help me with him," I added.

We managed to get him, an insensate heap, into the boat. "Osgood!" muttered Cyrenus. He looked

keenly into his face, then felt his wrist. Next he tore away the soaked clothing and applied himself to a thorough examination of the heart action. Then he looked up at me with a peculiar expression.

"What are you goin' to do with him, Cap'n?" he asked. "Bury him here or ashore?"

"Why, what do you mean?" I demanded.

He chuckled. "You've gone to a lot of trouble for nothin'," he answered. 'Why, man, he's dead as a stone."

"But how did it happen?" I exclaimed. "It couldn't have been the bump he's had."

"No," replied the little man, examining the prostrate man's head. "That didn't any more than stun him. It's something inside."

And, though the surgeons did not take the trouble to examine the body ere we laid it away, hardly considering it worth the time, one of them told me that he knew that Miles had suffered for years with heart disease. And truly, the events of his last night on earth were calculated to invite the best offices of such a malady.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A BROKEN DREAM

The peace of August, like a benediction, lay in the shadowed valleys and on the sunlit, smiling hills. Out in the vast forest, with foliage stirred by the perfumed breath of summer at its full, brooded the still hush of Nature, Nirvanic in its calm, its great soul undisturbed by the warring of the puny parasites who swarmed above its throbbing heart. Ah, futility incarnate! We who quarrel away our little day, even as they before us, whose forgotten dust is spurned by the feet of the to-day which in a breath is yesterday, while the great Force that some name Nature and some God, lives on, eternal, glowing in its recurring green, year after year, as on the day when man first slew his brother and the brow of the murderer was branded with the mark of Cain!

At the brink of the bluff we stood, Renee and I, gazing out across the still waters of the bay. It was the evening following my thrilling experience at the Narrows. In the west, touching the rim of the horizon, the red sun was dipping in glory to his rest in the calm lake, seeming about to lave his glowing body, hot with his completed labor, in its cool embrace. Lanes of vari-colored light stretched quivering across the glassy water; a retinue of rosy clouds attended the spent monarch of the

departing day. Through the afternoon, tremulous with heat, the breezes had been asleep. The lake lay slumbering, mirror-like and placid, touched with the drowsy sheen of a millpond. But even as we looked, the sun sank in the distant water, the air was tinged with the first faint presage of the cool of the coming evening. There came the breath of a new-born breeze and a thousand tiny ripples quivered where before there had lain silence. The first dim shadows gathered. I looked into the face of the girl beside me. The brilliance lent by the passing sunlight had died in her wonderful eyes, and reflected in their clear depths, as I gazed, the shadows gathered with the twilight.

I pointed with a laugh to the final fading afterglow of the great crimson ball that had plunged beneath the surface. The lake, swept clear of sails, stretched tenantless.

"It is peace," I said ironically. "All but these, they tell of more blood letting," indicating the batteries that lined the bluff, their black mouths gaping.

"Yes, M'sieur Gilbert, and the sun sank red," she answered, gazing wide-eyed out at the deepening murk of the twilight. "It is like that last sunset in Paris. Young as I was, I had a horrible fancy, for I remember thinking it was the reflection of the blood that was spilled in the streets. Oh, my friend," she burst out, "when is this to end?"

"God knows!" I rejoined savagely. "How can we ever expect an ending when we are misled by futile incompetents? I"—but I bit my lip, for I was not yet a private citizen.

She egged me on, however. "But Monsieur the

Commodore Chauncey, has he not again sailed for Niagara?" she asked me, dimpling.

"True," I assented morosely. "And then, what end is served?"

"But," she remonstrated, with mock gravity, "Monsieur the Commodore, he is a very busy man, yes. He is seldom idle. He flits hither and yon, like the bee."

"Yet drones like one," I commented sarcastically. "Moreover, he lacks the capacity for results possessed by that admirable insect. Mark you, mademoiselle, there have been Perry and McDonough. There has also been and still is Chauncey; the latter as busy, I grant you, as they. My point? Simply that there is a difference between an infinite capacity for work and a capacity for infinite achievement."

She laughed. "I fear you to be hard upon the poor man," she returned lightly. "Does he not continue to build ships for our protection? Is not the Chippewa coming together at Storrs' Harbor and is not the New Orleans, which is a giant, m'sieur, building here? What more can the poor man do?"

"Fight!" I responded, with laconic emphasis. "But he won't, not if he sees them first. For that would determine the issue, which contingency, worse luck, he fears."

"Merci, m'sieur," she laughed, dropping me a mocking curtesy, "I believe you." Then, suddenly grown serious, she sadly shook her small, brown head.

"I guess he won't fight," she concluded mournfully. Then, "Why won't he, m'sieur?" with a

swift return to raillery. "Is it because he has a heart that is kind and cannot bear to kill?"

"Or to be killed," I responded dryly. "It is one of the penalties of prominence, in time of war, that commanders, whether true or mis-called ones, shall be if possible killed or captured. Chauncey is determined that neither contingency shall overtake him."

"Still," she continued teasingly, "you must needs admire the manner in which he keeps out of the way of both of them. It is superb."

"Only because his opponent is made of the same indeterminate stuff!" I answered hotly. "If not, he'd have been cooling his heels across the water long before now, with many others of us!"

She laughed in my face. "You are red, like a turkey, M'sieur Gilbert," she cried. Whereupon I became as two turkeys.

"It is perhaps almost treasonable," she continued with soft reproach, suddenly sobering, "but I fear me I can scarcely blame you. Your blood is of the right tint, m'sieur."

I bowed. "So also is your own, mam'selle," I retorted. "It is what tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. For as I know your real opinion is a twin of my own, you cannot with justice berate me for expressing what we both feel."

"Perhaps," said she. "But let us speak of a more pleasing subject," seating herself upon a grassy knoll. I threw myself down beside her.

"Very well," I acquieced, tearing at the grass with ruthless hands, "but the conversation will be one-sided."

"Why so?" she asked.

"Because, if the choice of a subject is left to me, I shall choose yourself," I rejoined, "and, in my

enthusiasm, I should monopolize the conversation. It would be a monologue, and you, appalled at my adjectives would likely leave me. Perhaps you had better choose."

"I should be truly sorry to deprive thee of my society," she said demurely, hands crossed and eyes rolled heavenward. "Therefore, I will take thy suggestion. Let us talk, I pray thee, of thee."

The quaint assumption of Quakerism, a pair of which sect she had met at the Harbor, was irresistible. "Mam'selle," I cried, laughing, "a truce! I am undone. Shall it be your robin or John's dog?"

The smiling face sobered. Its pure loveliness, dim in the deepening twilight, was touched with a wistful shadow.

"Oh, as to that," she said softly, "M'sieur John is himself infinitely more interesting."

I stared out into the soft gloom. A few stars, as yet pale dots, winked overhead. Far off, over the dark crest of the environing forest, showed the round wraith of a full moon, which, when the night was wholly come, would shine like silver. In the shrouded lake below us there was the splash of a fish at play.

"He is a man," I muttered, more to myself than to her. "A man, and how many of us, after all, can be accounted such? For when we are old we do not put away childish things."

"Such a man," intoned her voice beside me, strong and full, "as God must have created ere he rested the seventh day. Might and mercy welded. It is grand and poetic—and it is terrible!"

I gazed at her in wonder. The eyes of her were alight. There was that in her face that thrilled even while it disheartened me; the primal passion

of admiration that woman has felt for power from the beginning; the homage that her nature pays to the magnificence of might; that which has come down, a fixed and changeless thing, out of the dim old past; a thing half savage, half divine!

"Ah," she continued, with shining eyes, "I never see him without the thought of the gladiators of old Rome, of the leonine Richard, of Samson and the lion! He is such a giant, yet his touch is like a woman's when he wills, his manners those of the court, his voice deep and placid as a pond! When I see and speak with him each passing day, remembering the things I know and the tales that are told of the terrific power of him, it is like a page from some impossible romance. Why, M'sieur Gilbert, to think that he could take you, who are far more strong than most, and break you like a reed! Why, you would be an infant in his hands!"

"True, I should," I assented glumly, though the reflection was not comforting at the moment. I stared in silence out into the night that gradually grew luminous with the growing lustre of the great white globe yonder. Renee, too, seemed preoccupied. We remained wordless. At times I stole a glance at her abstracted face, turned toward the moonlit water.

Our mutual attitude had been from the first that of frank friendliness. Of what I hoped in secret I trusted I had made no sign, for there had been nothing in her manner that should have encouraged it. Pride forbade my figuring, even in the eyes of my divinity, as a suppliant for love where there was none to give. Still, Hope,—which usually dies, if indeed it dies at all, only with the body,—whispered at times of a tomorrow, and I took heart

of Hope. This night I had yearned for her with a wistful tenderness that filled my soul as a cup with wine, and at first she had seemed very near to me. But now, as I sat staring sombrely into the star-strewn night, with her silent at my side, she seemed immeasurably away. The thin, gray wall, relentless and invisible, that rears itself with the dawn of doubt, stretched between us, dolorous and dismal. There was a funereal throbbing of my heart; the lassitude of discouragement stole in upon me.

After a time I rose. "Come, it is late," I said gently, and we walked slowly to the house. Only my father and M. De Montefort were there. John and Dorothy, they told us, were out strolling. Ere long the two came in, having been examining the new barracks.

I tried reading but it could not hold me. John lighted his pipe and I followed suit. Bah, it was close inside! Seizing my hat, I left the house.

I passed through the village, my brain in a turmoil. Leaving the cluster of houses, I plunged into my beloved woods. Cool, whispering breezes fanned my hot forehead; the soil, stirred by my restless feet, gave forth its rich odor; the stir of startled night creatures sounded near me. About me there rose, in ghostly guise, the great gnarled trunks, the pillars of the green tabernacle that is God's. After a little I paused, with a shamed laugh. No petty flurry of mind could live in such a scene.

Retracing my steps, I emerged from the woods and sauntered leisurely into the village. Approaching the house I thought of taking a final smoke ere seeking sleep. I vaulted the fence into the garden, grown high with shrubbery and the flowers that Dorothy loved.

Drawing my pipe from my pocket, I advanced toward a rustic seat near the end of the enclosure. As I approached it I heard voices. A few paces more and I was immediately behind the seat. It held two persons, a man and a woman. Probably John and Dorothy, I thought.

I was about to hail them when a low breathed word from the girl caught my ear. "Yes," she had murmured, smiling tenderly up at the eager face above her own, a face that told its story as if it had been letters of fire burned into my numbed brain. For she who was with John, she was not Dorothy, but Renee!

He grasped her hands, a transfiguring joy in his face, "Mine has been a lonely life," he said humbly. "And you—do not mistake?"

Again the lovely smile. "M'sieur John," she answered him softly, "I do not mistake." He raised her hand to his lips.

And as for me, creeping stealthily out of the garden, in deadly fear lest they should see me, I gained the street and made my blind way to the bluff, where I threw myself down, drawn face in the pitying grasses that were wet with cooling dew, writhing in the black agony of my broken dream.

CHAPTER XXXIV

OUT INTO THE NIGHT

The night was far spent when I arose and stumbled toward the house. The sky had meanwhile grown black with clouds, sullenly rolling, like breakers, from the west. The moan of a rising wind sounded; infinitely sad, dreary as death. As I left the bluff I heard the hoarse bay of the surf, breaking at the stony base of the cliff. There was a breath of moisture in the air; the spray shaken from the wings of the coming storm. From time to time a livid flash of lightning writhed like a serpent across the inky scroll of the sky. Far off the thunder muttered, rumbling like war drums before the bellow of the cannonade.

My limbs, like lead, moved mechanically homeward. All through the gathering blackness of the night, as I lay prone on the bluff in the grasses,—fighting the sorrow that must ever make or mar, the grief that kills youth's dream and brings into being, for better or worse, the man,—there had lain in my breast a stone while my brain was burning; diabolically, pitilessly alert. Through it, whirling in letters of white-hot fire, there had flashed over and over, like the sword that turned and twisted interminably over the gates of forfeited Eden, the maddening word, "Another's."

And that other. The man who had won her, the giant with the thews of steel and the heart of a woman; the courage of a lion and the courtesy of a courtier! My friend, and, more than that, my brother; between whom and my miserable self there had been knit the bond that is, for the few, a Gordian knot! He, of all men!

The bitter irony of it struck home and I quivered to my very soul. As I lay there in the darkness I had groaned that I hated him, yet had known in my heart that I lied. For, even in my misery, I felt dully the absurdity of quarreling with appointed fate, of rebellion against the fixed plan that controls the rolling of the worlds even as it guides the little affairs of the poor, blind parasites who tenant them. And with our positions reversed, would he have hated me? I knew from my soul he would not, and felt wholesome shame.

As I entered the house the storm broke and a torrent of rain struck the roof with the crackle of musketry. I went to my room, throwing off my coat. I seemed stifling. Pushing up the window, I leaned out into the storm-swept night, my whirling thoughts as wild as the sobbing wind.

All the sweetness of her, all the grace and beauty I had hoped to possess; the memories gripped and tore me. The scenes of our associations, the lodge in the forest, the lonely graves, the meeting in Frontenac, the hallowed presence of her in this very house; all these pictures and more,—vain imaginings of one life for the twain of us,—rioted in my brain like devils; tormenting, insatiable. Into the mad whirl came the memory of that moment in her father's cabin, when the realization

smote me that I loved her; the silly dream that followed, the dream of a high, calm resignation should it be ordered that she should be another's than my own; to be to me the ghost of a sweet, dead memory, my dream lady!

My dream lady, forsooth! God in heaven! but I had grown since then! Truly, after all, I had put away childish things and become a man with a soul for the iron to enter. I clenched my hands in hopeless fury. I felt a dull pitying scorn of the callow fool that had been; a sneering pity for the miserable fool that was. Surely I must have been blind, else why had I not seen? Unrecking of realities, I had builded a castle of dreams, with fair turrets of hope fashioned by my own egotistical folly, encouraged by no word or sign of hers, as I now saw so clearly. And now the crash had come, the fabric was fallen and I lay stunned among the ruins.

And it was the more bitter because I realized hopelessly that my dream lady could be but a wraith, a maddening, haunting memory that could but embitter the years, creeping slowly to the tomb, with the brine of unrequited longing. My dream lady! It had been a pretty fancy, truly; the fancy that had come to a sensitive, imaginative boy, in one of those odd, brief moments of mental and spiritual exaltation which come in a warm glow that lifts the spirit, for the moment, to the heights, where nothing seems impossible, and then in a flash is gone, leaving the thrilling clay to cool again among the fleshpots. For we are only human, God help us!

Such a glow I had felt, but it had faded, to be

succeeded by that other that is the common heritage of men. For it was herself I craved, not a chimera; herself, warm, living; the light of her eyes and the glory of her face; her lips, her love and all the rare, fair sweetness of her. A man, I loved a woman, and to behold her slipping from me, out into an alien current, was madness.

I laughed at the bitter irony of it, a sound that rang strangely in my own ears, recalling me to my surroundings. It was as if I had partially awakened from a hideous nightmare. I was conscious of leaning far out of the window, of the storm beating in my face, of soaked clothing that clung dankly to me, of chilling rivulets of water trickling down my neck and breast. I turned from the window and threw myself upon the bed, but not to sleep. The long hours crawled by, like sluggish serpents, while I lay inert, spent with the turmoil that raged within me; living over the past with its bitter sweetness, recoiling from the present with its blackness of darkness that appalled me, gazing into the barren future as if with blinded eyes. Hours dragged like ages till the gray dawn, cheerless with rain, rent the black veil overhead, ushering in the dispirited day.

Inaction grew intolerable. I rose, and, heedless of the rain, left the house quietly and made my way, with nervous haste, to the bluff. Great smashing surges rolled in, thundering against the long, gray wall, flinging their spray far up on the face of the cliff. The wind swept by, unwearied, over the lake, over the soaked, bending grasses of the clearing, finally moaning through the interlaced branches of the forest beyond. Somehow the wildness calmed me and brought a shade of peace.

At last mindful of appearances, I returned to the house, entering without disturbing any one. A little later and they were astir. Nerving for the ordeal, I put myself to rights and descended to breakfast. I explained my haggard appearance by a headache and sleepless night, a plea which was literally true. Renee and Dorothy, very solicitous, were bent upon procuring remedies. Renee, especially, displayed a concern which was, to my mind, so maternal or sisterly at the least, that it added to my misery. Finally, excusing myself, I left the house abruptly to plunge into work which could not but be a relief.

John remained behind. His duties were not pressing just now, and, I told myself bitterly, he could well afford to remain as long as he wished. A sudden rush of self-disgust assailed me. What a cur I was, to be sure; what a cur!

Toward noon I was summoned to headquarters by General Izard. I found him in his office, the room where, long ago, I had been commissioned by General Brown to go to Frontenac.

"Captain Warburton," said the general, "I know of you as a brave and resourceful man."

I made silent acknowledgement. Somehow it did not matter so much now.

"We are about to consider a most serious matter," he continued gravely. "There is, as you know, great cause to fear a British invasion this fall. I have reason to believe that not only this port, but every one of importance on the lake and the upper St. Lawrence is threatened. It stands us in good stead to learn all possible facts regarding this."

I assented silently.

"You are attached to the Secret Service of the

Army of the North," he pursued, "and, owing to the peculiar circumstances surrounding your special sphere of usefulness, you are the man to procure the information necessary to us. But it is a perilous mission, so perilous that I will stipulate that your decision whether you will undertake it rests with yourself."

I bowed.

"The mission involves more than a swift dash across the border and a quick return," he went on. "Whoever goes, it will entail the taking of adequate time to learn the plans, fighting strength and complete resources of the enemy from Montreal to Frontenac. Your role of Stranahan, which you have so successfully maintained up to the present time, renders you, for reasons known to both of us, the best man for the mission. Still, if you would rather not, I shall seek some one else, but I will send no man unwillingly upon this errand."

"You need seek no further," I said quietly.

"Good!" he rejoined. "It will be necessary for you to proceed overland to Ogdensburgh and drop down the river from there in a boat that will be ready for you. To start above that port would be dangerous on account of the Prescott batteries and the activity of the enemy on the upper river. Land at whatever Canadian point above Montreal your judgment may approve, acquaint yourself with matters in that town, and then make your way, with such deliberation as you require, up the river to Frontenac. Owing to the present vigilance on the lake, you will have to make your departure from there as best you can. Secure full information. Considering your capability and experience,

I do not feel that you require more specific directions. Start as soon as possible."

"I can start to-night," I answered.

"Good-by and good luck attend you," he said as we saluted. I left the office.

I welcomed the mission. It required all my resource and would divert my mind from my luckless affair. I was not morbid enough to desire to hug my misery in monotony at home. I was glad the word had come to bestir myself on the other side. I needed it.

Moreover, I considered that my chances for executing the commission were good, for the reasons I have explained in the foregoing pages of this record. I knew that I was still supposed to be the luckless Stranahan, and, only a month before, had met by appointment some representatives of that officer's chief, from Montreal, at Prescott. Not to have kept the appointment would have aroused suspicion, so, mustering what bravado I could command, and I had a little in those days, I had met them. We conferred and parted, and, through rare good luck, they had returned to Montreal suspecting nothing. I had sent additional messages since and was confident that Stranahan was still in the good graces of the British secret service. Truly, it was a merry comedy, but there was a noose in the last act, should fortune fail me. Still, the episode with John's father had passed without his having occasion to suspect me of anything unusual, and, as for Osgood, who might have betrayed if he could not kill me, had not a kind Providence removed him from my path only two nights agone?

I made my preparations. I resolved to engage a sailboat to take me to Port Putnam that night,

starting late. From there I would proceed overland to Ogdensburgh, at which port I would secure my boat and drop down the river toward Montreal, as planned.

The day continued gloomy, though the rain abated. I told them at the house that I should leave that night on a mission that would take some time, though I did not explain its import. All expressed concern and anxiety for my welfare. Renee's eyes sought mine with a troubled expression. I caught myself wondering if, after all, she had noted my presence in the garden the previous night.

By evening my arrangements were made. My Stranahan outfit, including the valuable papers that might be handy one fine day to prove that I was not I, but another, was packed ready to hand. I would assume the character after leaving Ogdensburgh.

After the late supper I left the house abruptly to avoid godspeeds, which I detested. I walked through the village toward the woods, bending my steps in the direction of Fish Island, at the extreme end of the long bay that stretched inshore for several miles. The rain had entirely ceased, but a brisk northwesterly wind drove a bank of clouds, in ragged masses, like dense smoke across the sky.

A step padded near me, a soft red glow showing next me in the night. A cloud of tobacco smoke floated benignly in my face.

"Where is it this time, Gilbert?" asked John. He was privileged. "Montreal," I replied, falling into step with him, "and from there up the river to Frontenac. They want to see what there is of this threatened invasion."

"Risky business," he growled. "If we had gone about it, Gilbert, there would have been nothing left for them to invade with."

"Quite probable," I replied dryly. "But we didn't, nor will."

"I guess you're right," he answered with a sigh. "Skim milk and dishwater."

"Wind and whiskey, whiskey and wind!" I rejoined savagely, kicking at a twisted root that had all but thrown me. He grunted.

We were entering the sodden, shadowed woods. Suddenly he paused. "Gilbert," he said, "I want to tell you something."

"You needn't, John," I answered, steadying my voice, while my heart tightened. "I know it already." I was glad my face was in the gloom.

"Ah, then she told you!" His tone was one of unaffected delight. "Then I know you will congratulate me." His hand sought my own, crushing it in a mighty clasp.

I stared. He was no dissembler. He actually believed that I was pleased. Pleased! Had he forgotten the day in the forest when we stood over what we thought to be her grave? No, he assuredly had not, but——

I saw it now. I was still young and he was much older than I. He had taken it for a mere boyish passion, by now outgrown. And I could not blame him, for since Renee had come to the Harbor, now so long before, I believed I had given no sign that she virtually possessed me should she will. I could almost doubt that she herself knew it. As for Dorothy,—but Dorothy was a little tease from infancy. And now, when the iron had entered my soul, he stood by me, and, in all his open frankness,

he asked me to congratulate him! Ah, well, it was better so! I wrung his hand.

"I do congratulate you, John," I said, and I thank God that my voice rang true. "Be worthy of her."

"Be sure of that," he answered quietly, and silence fell between us.

Strange, after all, that he happened to follow me that night, into the ghostly woods. A little thing, yet by that whirl of the wheel of fate the currents of his life and mine were destined to be diverted into strange channels, undreamed of, that wound into the shadows.

We continued to walk through the forest, finally fetching up at a little lean-to, built by choppers in the neighborhood who had cut trees for the ribs of the battleships. We entered, throwing ourselves down upon a rude bed of poles and fragrant balsam. Close at hand we could hear the lapping of water, for we were not far from the shore of the bay. John smoked. I reached in my pocket for the means to the same end. We reclined there, smoking and chatting of everything, of nothing. Perhaps an hour passed.

Suddenly John raised his hand. "Hark!" he muttered. "What's that?"

"What's what?" I returned drowsily, for the lack of sleep had begun to assert itself.

"Thought I heard voices." he answered. "Away up yonder."

"Bah!" I replied, settling back comfortably upon the balsam. "It's the breeze."

"No," he said decidedly. "Hark! there it is again." He listened a moment. "Can't you hear a murmur?"

"Not a murmur," I replied, having strained my ears. "John, you must quit it. You must have been pouring it down."

He rose. "I'm going to investigate," he announced. "Want to come?"

"No," I replied chaffingly, "I want to smoke. Bring me what you find." He smiled and stepped outside, his faint footfalls dying away into silence.

I rested, watching the glow of my pipe bowl. I could dreamily imagine the smoke curling upward in the murk. Now the black void became shot through and through with light; there bent over me the arch of the blue sky. The cloud wreaths expanded, then separated fluffily, floating in little white patches, which, as I gazed; grew into a cloud of winging pigeons, when——

I sprang up with a distinct shock. All was dark about me. My foot struck something. I groped, picking up the object. It was my pipe! no spark remained within the bowl, which felt cold in my fingers.

Slowly my dazed senses awoke. "John!" I called. There was silence.

I stepped out into the woods, calling him again. There was no answer. The wind moaned in the branches over me. I walked down to the shore, looking out across the ruffled bay, dim in the gloom. It stretched, faintly spectral, before me; like the shore, destitute of life.

Perplexed and a little irritated, I walked back toward the village. "He must have gone back, but why did he leave me?" I muttered. "Or, if not, why is he mooning in the woods on a night like this?" Which was a case of the pot and the kettle, since it was one of my own most inveterate habits.

Probably he had come across something that had interested him and had wandered away. He was fully as irresponsible as myself, under like circumstances, when he got into the woods.

I made all haste to my boat, where my outfit had been previously placed. I tumbled into it, wondering how long I had slept. I learned ere I could ask.

"Holy Jehosaphat!" grumbled my steersman, an old salt of the town, "thought you was never comin'. It's most midnight." And we cast off, sailing out into the night. We rounded the point, cleaving the long swells of the bay. He knew the lake to its last cranny.

About five miles out we heard behind us the sound of waves cleft by the prow of an approaching boat. Almost before we could turn our heads it was alongside, and, in a moment more, was past. It was a schooner, far larger than our own small craft. It drew rapidly ahead. Some shadowy figures stood on the deck.

"Hey, you, where you bound?" cried my steersman, squinted eyes trying to pierce the darkness.

"None of your damned business!" came insolently, in a voice that boomed.

I started violently. I knew that voice.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE LION CAGED

It had come as I had planned thus far, without mishap. I was again approaching Frontenac, but this time from her own side. The last stop of the journey was close at hand. A day or two in Frontenac, and then for home.

Reaching Port Putnam, as I had arranged, I had procured a horse and journeyed to Ogdensburgh, where I found my boat and dropped down the river. Landing some distance above Montreal, I made my way cautiously into the city. I spent only such time as was absolutely necessary there, prosecuting my investigations by night and being as unobtrusive as possible in the daylight, as discretion demanded. I drew a long breath of relief when I had left the town safely behind me.

I proceeded leisurely up the river, by horse and post, as a civilian, which role I had assumed when too uncomfortably close to Montreal. It was not till I reached Prescott that I deemed it expedient to appear as Stranahan. It was necessary there, for they thought they knew me. So I slipped into the role again, and, after having secured the information I wanted, continued up the river to Frontenac.

Securing, by way of variety, a Canadian boatman just below the Thousand Isles, I had him bring

me up the river, through the north channel, to the lake, thoroughly enjoying this trip among this marvellous chain of beauty spots. I had him land me just below the town, quietly to approach it with due caution. I made my way through the woods to the main road. An autumnal wine was in the air; already brilliant patches showed here and there among the leaves. A squirrel whisked up the trunk of a maple, darting startled beady eyes at me. I threw myself down upon my back on a bed of pine needles, looking idly up at him.

Suddenly there came a rush out of the woods. Something sprawled over me, lapping my face, nearly smothering me. I scrambled to my feet. A great gaunt hound capered about me. John's Gypso, by all that was holy! I stared.

"How are ye, Captain?" inquired a dry, cracked voice near me, low and cautiously. I started violently and turned. He stood confronting me, grinning.

"Cyrenus!" I exclaimed. "What the——"

"For a purpose, Captain," said he, with a certain solemnity. "I have a mission; in fact, two missions."

"Where is your company?" I asked. "Why are you not with it?"

"In Sackets, at least when I left," he answered. "My time expired, Captain."

For the first time I marked the significance of his uniform, which was that of a British infantryman. "What are you doing on this side in that garb?" I demanded, in swift anger.

"Why, it's simple enough," he replied with a grin. "I've enlisted with the reds, that's all."

"You renegade!" I sneered. "Now I suppose

you will consider it your duty to place me under arrest, won't you? Well, you'll be kept busy doing it. I suppose the old love grew too strong! I remember you have been before a member of the red-coated crew!"

"Then which side am I a renegade to?" he asked, a grin cracking the leathery face of him, an odd twinkle in his little eyes.

"To both!" I answered, in disgust. "The term 'soldier of fortune' is a synonym for sneaking hound!"

"Thankee, Captain," he replied, his tranquility strangely undisturbed for a man of so peppery a temper as I knew he possessed. "Now, perhaps, seein' you've had your say, you'll shut your mouth long enough for me to explain."

"Why, confound your insolence!" I ejaculated. "How can you explain!"

"It's easy," he retorted. "I've enlisted, it's true, with armies I fought with long before you began squalling for your pap. And bear in mind, young man, that before that, I fought in the cause with your father, to wrest our land yonder from the British. Do you think I am here to bear arms against your flag and mine? No! When I am though here I shall desert, cut sticks and cross the lake again to re-enlist."

"Then why are you here?" I burst out, though feeling somewhat less sure of appearances. For the odd dignity that had so impressed me at the time of his enlistment again sat upon and transformed Cyrenus. He stood very erect, his little spare figure stiff as a ramrod. His queer, small, puckered face, which might have equally belonged to a man of fifty or of seventy, was enigmatical.

"For two reasons, my suspicious young cock," he answered dryly. "The first, to even a score with an old enemy I've learned by accident is here in Frontenac. The second, to do what I can toward getting out of a bad scrape a certain friend of yours."

"Of mine!" I exclaimed. "Why, who is he?"

"A valued captain of militia until lately stationed at Sackets Harbor, New York, he answered, watching my changing face with malicious satisfaction, born, and small wonder, of the things I had said to him. "Perhaps you will recall the name, John Godfrey!"

I stared at him, sinking weakly upon a mossy log. "John!" I stammered. "Why, where is he?"

"Somewhere in Frontenac," replied Cyrenus, with a wicked grin. "Just where remains for you 'nd me to find out. He is imprisoned, I think in the fortress, though I ain't sure."

"But how did it happen?" I demanded. "When was he taken and who captured him?"

"The night you life," replied Cyrenus, "you and he were seen to enter the woods together early in the evening. We knew you got away all right, but Godfrey failed to return to the house that night or the next morning. We went down to the lake shore, and, about a mile and a half toward Fish Island, we came to a spot that showed the marks of a tremendous struggle. The shore was trampled as if it had been the scene of a bull fight. We picked up some torn clothing that we found was John's. They must have pretty near ripped his whole uniform off him. There was a lot of blood spilled, too, and I'll bet it wasn't all his." He chuckled and resumed.

"A little more investigation showed that a strange schooner was seen to sail out of Kahuahgo Bay that night. Everything pointed to John bein' aboard that schooner. Well, my time was up in a few days, and as soon as it expired, I drew my pay and got across. When my business here is done with, I shall go back and re-enlist. I thought on comin' here that it would be better to work in the open, so I joined the king's men, tellin' 'em a tale of an old British veteran who couldn't stand it to keep still any longer. Of course, I didn't say anythin' about my services over yonder." He grinned sarcastically. "I'm drawin' king's rations," he observed, "and have been for some few days."

"What have you discovered?" I asked.

"Only that John is held prisoner somewhere in the town under a murderous charge," he answered, "lodged by the man who brought him from the Harbor. He is accused of bein' a British renegade, and of firin' the powder magazine at Little York and killin' a number of the king's soldiers, thinkin' his own men had got out of harm's way."

I gasped. "And the man who lodges the accusation——" I muttered.

"Is that hound, Red Rolfe," added Cyrenus. I saw again the rush of the strange ship through the water; heard the sound of a hated voice. I sprang to my feet.

"We must save him!" I cried. And putting out my hand, "Forgive me, Cyrenus. I was an ass!"

"You were, my boy!" he exclaimed with conviction. "Let it teach you not to take too much for granted. You are mighty young yet."

I swallowed it, for it was true. "What shall we do?" I asked. I turned to the little man, for in my

humbled comprehension he was expanding like the fabled Arabian genii of the bottle.

"You go ahead with your business here," he answered, "and keep your eyes open. I'll do the same, and between us we'll find where he is in short order. Then we'll confer about getting him out. Now we had better get apart."

"You had another object in coming," I ventured, as he turned to go. His strange, puckered face became lighted with malevolence. The piercing little eyes were as hard as nails.

"John's turn comes first," he replied, dry as dead bones. "We must cheat the hangman. The other can wait." His lean jaws closed with a vicious snap. He again turned to go. Gypso wagged himself alongside, fawning upon the little man.

"How comes he here?" I asked Cyrenus, indicating the dog.

"Followed me to the boat when I left the Harbor," he responded. "Bound to come along. Seemed to know somethin' was up. Mess has made a pet of him. Think he's mine." He was gone, the dog capering after.

I made my way slowly toward the town, musing on the startling news. I cursed my stupidity in sleeping at the shack that night instead of accompanying John as he had asked me. While I slumbered he had been harried by those hounds. True, had I been there, I would have probably accompanied him, rendering the execution of my present delicate mission impossible. Still, it was but human to regret. I cursed the whim that had led my feet into that quarter. Any other direction would have saved John. The surrounding circumstances made it impossible to believe that Rolfe's party had come

for the express purpose of capturing the intrepid trapper. I was certain, on the contrary, that their mission had been some other, equally or more nefarious; that they landed for some purpose, making the noise that his lynx's ears had unfortunately heard so far away, and that he had somehow walked into the very midst of them and the struggle had resulted. There must have been a pack of them, I reflected grimly, and some battered wounded to help on board. However, the thing was done, and the problem of his succor was to be solved. That he should be found and released I was determined, else death and I might meet in Frontenac.

Reaching the town, I made my way to the King's Inn, where I met sundry of my whilom comrades. Them I told, with perfect truth, that I had come from Montreal. I added that I would remain in Frontenac a few days before proceeding, by boat, to Little York. I regaled them with fictitious accounts of my experiences among the Yankees and enjoyed with them a mug or two of good, old British ale.

In a corner of the room was seated the militia captain, Chichester, my cowardly opponent of the duel so long before. In glancing about I marked his presence. I noted the disfigured nose, which I had broken in that curious clash, and repressed a desire to laugh. Darting me one venomous glance out of bleared eyes, he rose, leaving the room. He was more dissipated than ever in appearance; a guzzling, uniformed rake.

"Wonder he doesn't drink himself to death," commented one of the officers, when he was gone. "Has a copper-lined stomach. His head is addled as a bad egg most of the time. Were he a regular,

he would be cashiered. As it is, they have overlooked him."

I had supper with my British friends and smoked with them later in the twilight. Our talk concerned the American invasion, which I had learned all along the line was contemplated, though, with the same tardiness that characterized many of our own commanders, the definite plans had not yet been perfected. Frontenac, however, was teeming with aggressive preparation. I found my red-coated friends eager for action, particularly for a descent on Sackets Harbor. Their inability to capture that port had evidently left a raw spot in the British pride.

The full moon rose luminously in a sky that was peppered with stars. The night was magnificent for a stroll. Excusing myself, I left my companions and sauntered through the town and out upon the straggling street upon which stood the house that had once sheltered Renee. A light was in the window. I passed with a look that was lingering and bitter.

I gained the end of the road. Beyond me lay the shadowed forest, a vague, dark mass, stretching away in a long line of gloom. The old spirit claimed me. I plunged into the woods, moving swiftly and deviously away from the town, later turning back toward it. A cool autumnal breeze, stirring the boughs above me, whispered tremulously. My feet sank softly in a carpet of leafy mould.

Once I fancied I heard a stir behind me and stopped to listen, but no sound came. Imagination, I thought, and continued.

Suddenly a spectral, white glow, shimmering through the adjacent foliage, met my eyes. A few

strides and I was at the edge of a large, circular clearing, bare of trees save for a few belated patriarchs. The grassy floor, cleared of stumps and all obstructions, lay level before me, flooded with moonlight. I stared an instant and a rushing memory recalled the place. It was the duelling ground, the spot where I had once met a craven and discarded firearms for the use of a pair of itching fists. I gazed at the very spot where I had pummelled the cur and laughed low with satisfaction.

A hateful snarl came from the shadows back of me. I whirled, but even as I did so, something came down on my luckless head with a resounding thump and I dropped like a felled ox.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE PROVING OF CYRENUS

A tug at my wrists roused me. I opened a pair of bewildered eyes, blinking with the pain that rioted in my buzzing head. With the adjustment of returning senses came the hazy conviction that I was certainly a mark, and a shining one, for the slings and arrows. I glanced at my bound hands, which were crossed piously in front of me, the knots cutting into the flesh. They had evidently been drawn taut with savage satisfaction. Then I looked into the scowling face of Chichester, for he it was who was bending over me. I laughed with what bravado I could summon, struggling awkwardly to my feet.

"You have an easy advantage this time," I sneered. "Even a greater than that of a shot before the word! Do I mistake, or did you try to vary the monotony of your usual methods of thuggery just now by braining me?"

"No, the scaffold is better. I would not cheat it," he growled brutally. "I would rather see you dancing on nothing than eat when I am hungry."

"Or to drink when you are thirsty," I suggested. "Sorry I have not a bottle with me. I wonder you could leave the tap room long enough to follow me."

He struck me heavily across the mouth. The blood dripped from my cut, swelling lips as I strained at the cords. They only bit the deeper into my numbed wrists. He laughed sardonically.

"A blow for a blow, puppy," he said. My eyes blazed.

"At least your hands were free, you drunken cur!" I breathed, in an ecstacy of rage. He made as if to strike me again.

I sprang aside, and, as he came on, lowered my head and charged, bull-like, into his gross paunch, for dramming had bloated him mightily these two years gone. He fell, with a bellow of agony, and I over him. I snapped to my feet to find him rolling in the grass, deathly sick, hands clasping his belly. He gasped and gurgled, his red face suddenly gone chalky white. It was grotesque. I roared at the sight.

"Get up!" I told him, stirring his writhing carcass with my foot as he lay grovelling. "Don't cry. 'Tis but a little breeze on the stomach. It will pass. Just gulp."

Presently he got slowly upon his feet, being very shaky in the knees. I stepped toward him, and, bound as I was, he gave way before me, drawing a pistol, with which he threatened me.

"Bah!" I exclaimed in deep disgust, "there is not a drop of red blood in you!"

"Yours will shortly all go to your feet," he retorted, still keeping away from me, as I noted with amusement. "They will kick merrily at first, those feet, but they will grow heavy at the last, when you get black in the face and your tongue hangs out. Now I'll trouble you to march before me into the town. I'll take a hand myself!" with an oath.

"Let me ride on your shoulders," I suggested whimsically.

"Go on, now, no more parleying!" he cried, flourishing his pistol, which I judged by this time

he had forgotten to load before starting after me, a conjecture which later proved to be correct.

"So I am to be hanged, eh?" I asked curiously, making no move to obey his marching orders. "May I ask how you intend to bring this about?" with a sneer. "King's men do not usually hang comrades."

He burst into evil laughter. "No more do they—hang comrades!" he exclaimed. "But you—you are a comrade, are you? Your name is Stranahan, is it? You are attached to the Canadian secret service, are you? I tell you, you shall march before me into the town and be exposed for what you are! It's none of your business how I know, but I know you for a damned Yankee spy, and your name I can tell them yonder!"

"Yes," breathed a quiet voice near us, a strange attenuated voice that startled us to silence, "but you will never live to tell it!" And out of the shadow into the moonlit circle, there walked—Cyrenus.

Stopping an instant by me he put forth a hand. A keen blade cut my bonds. The severed cords dropped. My hands were free.

"Now," I growled exultantly, stepping toward my enemy, who stood as one dazed, "we will have this out right now, with fists, firearms or in any way, only this time it is to the death!" But I was thrust back with a force that amazed me, coming, as it did, from the spare little man who had delivered me. He stepped into my place, confronting the coward. I looked at them both, then stood motionless and speechless.

For Cyrenus was glaring into the coward's red-rimmed eyes, and the coward's were blasted with a stare of terror. Cyrenus' thin, wiry frame was

tense as a drawn bowstring; nervous tremors of anger shook him like a reed. His hands were clenched; his unwinking eyes, glowing like a cat's flamed into the white face opposite him. It was a strange and terrible tableau in that white, ghostly radiance; it held a grim significance born of a buried something in the churchyard of the past. For one of them the world would end that night. And which?

Which, indeed! Yon shivering coward, waxy pale, ghastly in the moonlight? Or that strange little figure, trembling with speechless rage, the pose alive with a leonine courage, the face that I scarcely recognized? For a certain awe stole over me as I watched him and wondered if I had ever really known him. The rough, uncouth mask that I remembered in my first acquaintance with him was gone like a discarded garment; the mask that had come doubtless to a ruined life, withered in a moment; the sour, dour mask that had grown more hideous with the dramming with which he sought to bring forgetfulness; the mask that endured until the night in the tavern when Noadiah, a missionary indeed, opened the eyes of the sour little man with his stinging words—and Cyrenus began the struggle back to manhood.

A royal return, indeed; for Cyrenus, as he now appeared, brought the vision of a youth season far different from his days of age. A certain conscious power, a premonitory sense of an impending something from him which should fill me with amaze, held and thrilled me. As he spoke, even the provincialisms picked up by his loose manner of living and his residence in a raw, new region dropped from him like uncouth rags, and his enunciation

was as pure as my own. The conviction seized me that, while he had not been born in the purple, he at least had lived with it, and, as he glared at the wretch opposite him, I divined in a flash that here stood the malign influence that had wrecked the little man—had made of him for a time a pariah among his fellows.

A breathless moment they remained, staring one at the other, after Cyrenus had thrust me back. Then the little man spoke to me, without removing his eyes from the creature's face, his voice soft as the first low snarl of some wild thing disturbed.

"No, boy," he muttered, "you stand back. This is my quarrel. Youth must defer to age. You have had provocation; yes, but mine has been greater. 'The first shall be last and the last first.' How true that is, Gilbert. You remember I told you that I came here to do two things and that I should do the other first. Well, God is good, and it is the second I shall do first, after all, for this night I shall kill a man!"

As he concluded his voice grew in intensity; there was in it the concentration of a world of hate; of a desire for death-dealing that held all of life. His hand, outstretched, pointed across at the whitened face of the wretch, who staggered backward, sick with fear. The voice went on, harsh with sarcasm.

"Watch him, Gilbert, don't let him run!" it admonished. "We must not have to stab him in the back, for it smacks too much of his way. He shall be forced to die like a man, whether he will or no, with his death wound in the breast! But why is he alarmed at the sight of an old man? Why, he looks as if he had seen a ghost!"

Still not a sound from the pallid bravo. Still the

eyes of the little man, gleaming with strange power, held the wretch's wavering own; still the wretch stood like a cowed criminal, apparently powerless to move or speak.

"A ghost!" pursued Cyrenus, his speech grown like bitter brine. "I'll wager, Gilbert, he does see one at this moment! The ghost of a brave young fellow dead for years, a young fellow who didn't look much like me, for God was good and made him like his dead English mother, God rest her! A young fellow with as stout a heart as ever pumped under any jacket and a sword arm that was famed through the kingdom, yes, and across the Channel; an arm I taught. Only this cur yonder, Gilbert,—this son of a British nobleman and a servant wench, for I know him if no one else does;—this cur who had even then been cashiered from the regular army in disgrace;—this adventurer of a dozen names, who if his record were known, would be strung up in Frontenac to-morrow by the men he insults with his association; this hound who is about to die, what of him? Only this, he didn't know of the boy's sword arm and its fame when he insulted the boy in the fencing rooms of the boy's own father, for he didn't know at the moment that the young fellow was the old man's son, you see. Nor did we know him, else he would have never been allowed inside those rooms. The cur knew the boy's father, though, and he could give you another name for him than the one you know; a name that London and the continent knew in the old days as a master of blades; a master who had as a stripling served our own land, Gilbert, in '76 and helped place it among the nations. The stripling was taken prisoner late in the struggle, chancing to fall under

the notice of a British officer who was as fine a gentleman as ever lived and a famous swordsman. Through a whim this officer began teaching the stripling whom he had caused to be treated with great consideration in captivity. The stripling learned the game with great rapidity, and, when the war ended, the officer took him to England with him and made of him a protegé. Every opportunity was afforded him, and his blade began soon to be celebrated. He married early and a son was born. The stripling had become a man, and, while he was not large, he was made of springs and steel. He appeared in Paris; in Vienna he met the German experts upon their own ground. He was never worsted. By and by, through pure love of fighting, he was for a time in the British armies, and others as well, a free lance. The boy was ten years old when the father finally returned to settle in London and to open modest rooms that were always filled with the clash of steel, for the flower of the kingdom came there then to be taught, Gilbert, by one you have known as humble and snuffling and of no account. And the boy grew up like a weed and his father taught him all he knew; taught him to know the sword as few men know their creeds. The boy, quite naturally, was younger than his father, and by and by there was not a better blade in London than his, nor among the king's men, for he took rank in George's armies, though he would never have borne arms against his father's country. But," he continued, his voice grown snarling, "the coward opposite, who will presently die, did not know who the boy was when he insulted him. He showed the craven when he heard the boy's name, but there were others present, so he pretended still

to be a man. A man! A meeting was arranged, but the day before the affair, the boy was found dead in a mean London alley, assassinated by hired thugs.

"Nothing could be directly proved," continued Cyrenus, after a slight, thrilling pause, his voice shadowed, "but those who knew the cur suspected. And the father of the dead man afterward learned from a confession by one of the assassins who it was that hired them. The cur, fearing the father, quitted London and the father could not find him. The mother, who had been in ill health for years, pined and died, and the fencer, again alone in the world, shut up his rooms, having no heart for them, and returned to American soil. Lately, through happy chance, the old man heard that the cur was in the king's service as a militia officer in Frontenac. The king's cause, did he know it, has fallen low indeed, and the only reason that the red uniform now appears upon the veteran is that he may be enabled through it to kill the cur. He has searched for the cur so many years that it seemed as if he would surely die before the cur did, but the quest has ended and it is the cur who will die first."

He stepped briskly into the shadow from whence he had come, Chichester's eyes following him stupidly. In an instant the old man reappeared, bearing a couple of rapiers. He must have shadowed the doomed ruffian since he had arrived at Frontenac, ready to force an encounter, in some secluded spot, at the first opportunity. This night had favored him, and he had evidently followed Chichester even as the militia captain had followed me. One of the blades the old man flung at the fellow's feet.

"Strip!" he ordered grimly, removing his own

coat. The man spoke at last. His lips were blanched, his voice hoarse.

"You are crazy," he croaked. "I never killed your son. I knew nothing of it!"

Cyrenus pressed the point of his weapon lightly against the other's breast. Chichester shuddered and recoiled.

"Strip!" again ordered the little man. "Take up that blade and protect yourself, or I'll run you through where you stand!"

There was no alternative. With the feeble flicker of courage possessed by the cornered mongrel, which snaps and snarls when dying, with the zest born of the insanity of fear, the ruffian prepared for his last stand. His jacket fell to the ground. He rolled up the sleeve of his shirt, his coarse face chalky, his eyes wild.

Cyrenus stood waiting, a man transformed. Was he indeed the insignificant pariah I had known? He stood irradiated in the moonlight; his odd wizened face thrilled and changed with a sense of power; the face of a master of his art, whatever it be, even if that of the scientific killing of a man. His throat was bare, his shirt sleeves were rolled to the elbow. He swished his light blade through the air. Grasping its supple point, he tested its temper with the air that marks the veteran. Now he raised the slender foil in salute and fell into position, his free arm half raised, his wiry form as spare and supple as a boy's, his face strangely youthful, his old eyes afire, a sour smile on his thin lips. The man opposite him, nerving himself, leaped forward as he essayed a desperate thrust.

The old man's feet never moved. As the other's blade, like a white flame, darted in, he bent forward,

interposing his own from underneath with a swift, upward parry. A second the two blades wrestled in midair, guard by guard. Then, in a flash, Cyrenus had twisted his own blade under and thrust inside his opponent's sword arm, straight at the red throat. A muffled howl broke from the bully. A few drops of blood, vividly red, more than I had thought the creature had, appeared at the slight wound, staining the neck crimson. Cyrenus sprang back with a dry laugh and I knew he was but playing with the rat.

"Faith, but you are awkward!" commented Cyrenus. "The boy would have had you dead by now, for he was younger than I. But I am young tonight, my dog, as young as Gilbert there, though after you are dead I fear me I shall feel old again! Come on and try to improve! All hell is watching for you. Try to enter it more gracefully!"

The scene for the next five minutes will be vivid in my memory till it dies with me. At the words a demon of desperation seized the doomed adventurer. Clenching his teeth at the taunt, he fell to with savage fury, revealing to me, who stood breathless at the edge of the moonlit clearing, that he was far from a novice.

The blades writhed and flashed in the air like flames, scraping interminably. Chichester pressed forward, foot by foot, in the vicious assault, seeking by every trick he knew, by every artifice he had ever learned, to avert the doom that was inevitable. For, as I looked at Cyrenus, I knew that this was so. Just now, I made no doubt simply to prolong the play, he chose to work purely on the defensive, but with a defence so perfect, so masterly, that my blood grew hot with admiration and my pulses

thrilled. Back he went, giving ground slowly inch by inch, his piercing eyes darting fire into the passion-bulged ones of his adversary. There was not an unnecessary motion. The wiry frame, superbly poised, responded with the suppleness of youth to every exigency. The defending blade, flashing meteor-like in the air, warding off thrusts with a nicety of calculation that was wonderful, seemed to turn hither and yon of its own volition. But I could see the tense forearm, small but swollen with knotted muscle, the wrist of steel, and, more than all else, the watchful eye, piercing as a needle, holding his opponent's own; the calm, impassive face; the eye and the face of a master. They spoke of the Continent, of dramas I might never know, of champions worsted, of the apogee of deadly skill. It was a revelation.

Presently Chichester's assault decreased in violence. His chest labored convulsively, he gave vent to great, sobbing breaths. He was tiring fast but still fought with fearsome stubbornness. Finally, as he lunged forward with a feeble thrust, Cyrenus stepped in. There was a ringing impact and Chichester stood disarmed, his rapier flying through the air. The point of the little man's weapon was against his breast.

"See!" cried Cyrenus, and his voice held the ring of his own steel. "I should kill you now! When did you ever refuse to kill a disarmed man? But I am neither a cur nor a coward! Go pick up your sword!"

He turned to do so, with a look of dumb entreaty in eyes that were like a bullock's in a slaughter-house. For he knew it was the end for him.

Once more the blades crossed, but now it was

the little man who assumed the aggressive. I stared amazed, for it was borne in upon me that the foregoing had been merely play for him. His blade flew in and out with such rapidity that it was difficult to even remotely follow the thrusts, like lightning flashes. Chichester did what he could, but I could see that he was helpless. He was driven backward, turning at the clearing's edge, and forced to retreat slowly around again in a circle. As they passed me I noticed that he was bleeding from the neck, arm and breast. Pin pricks only, administered by the lithe demon before him merely as foretastes. Chichester's labored breath came in sobs, tearing his great chest. The sweat from his forehead rolled down into his eyes, blinding him. Still he fought on; dogged, despairing, hopeless.

And as the little man thrust and feinted alternately with lightning-like rapidity, prolonging the agony with all the hot lust for revenge within him, he taunted the wretch with bitter, biting words.

"Look out!" he exclaimed. "Ah-h! you nearly got it that time. I had nearly thrust too far. I'm not ready to kill you quite yet. Pardon, does your arm pain you? Well, you have pained people in your time, people whose wounds were in the back. They did not know whose hand it was that pained them, but you know, do you not? For see, though you don't deserve it, your wounds are all in front. You are being forced to die like a man, but only that the ordeal may be somewhat protracted. However, I must hasten. Did you have a drink to-night, before you came here? I'm afraid you will go dry yonder, and you can't bridge the gulf. Lazarus could do you no good anyway, since you don't care for water. And it's too late to learn, for now you

have but a moment. Look out! You need bleeding,—take that! Well, let's end it! Ah-h take care! You were too late that time. Well, good bye to you!"

He drew the blade from the body and plunged it into the soft earth, wiping it dry with a tuft of grass. The body quivered briefly, then lay still. Except for one agonized cry, there had been no sound. Cyrenus stood quietly resuming his coat, his face sombre. He was breathing a little more quickly, that was all.

"Gilbert," he called, "help me drag this into the bushes. It will be found in a day or two, but think that will answer for our other purpose."

I assisted him. The dead eyes glared in the moonlight. Some cold drops of sweat beaded the forehead. I left him with relief.

We started toward the town. "Gilbert," he said with a certain severity,—somehow there was no reason why he should ever call me other than by my Christian name again,—"that's a bad habit you have of mooning around when it isn't healthy to do it. You'd ought to wear a helmet. You'll get your skull cracked some day."

"You are right," I answered, with humility. He could address me as he pleased henceforth. "I seem to be a butt for blows in that locality."

He smiled his sour smile at me. "You are young yet, very young," he averred. "The very young are always soft in the skull. Yours will harden some day."

And we tramped on.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE ENEMY PAVES THE WAY

I rose early the next morning. My sleep had been fitful and disturbed, for I had beheld interminably the scene of the night and heard the scrape of steel, with the thin blades always rasping, and the sound of the labored breathing of the man who now lay so quiet yonder. I saw the dead eyes with the look of terror, like a slaughtered bullock's, frozen in them; the dead face on which the cold, beaded sweat still stood; saw the body sprawled on the green in a gross, huddled heap. Toward the morning, however, I dropped into a heavy slumber which did much to freshen me. After breakfast I left the inn, stepping out into the sunshine.

The day was fit to dissipate bad dreams. The town lay gilded with radiance. Not a cloud drifted. I sauntered down to the docks, from whence sounded the ceaseless tap of hammers. Yeo was as active in Frontenac as his opponent across the sunlit waters. The ribs of half-finished mastodons reared above the stocks, over them swarmed, like ants, a multitude of workmen, tapping like woodpeckers. I smiled with inward contempt at this farcical zeal, this fuss and foam of incessant preparation, that was destined only to the doom of ridicule for the things left undone; to the spectacle of half-completed frigates in the coming time,

rotting on their mouldy stocks, beheld with idle curiosity by the men of a later day, who should open the page of history and learn with edification of the official mountains of naval effort that labored for achievement on either shore of old Ontario and brought forth mice.

I began unobtrusively to gain what information I desired, circulating freely, but with circumspection, among my acquaintances and others. I desired to attend to this as soon as possible, for I burned with impatience to secure John's release, with Bantwell's assistance, before I should attempt leaving for the Harbor. This I hoped we could accomplish speedily, for I felt ill at ease because of the dead body in the woods yonder. It was almost certain to be discovered in a few hours and an investigation would certainly be made. True, there were no visible clews to betray Cyrenus, but there lurked the possibility of some luckless circumstance revealing the living actors in the grim drama. I wished, as I reflected on these things, that we could have sunk the body in the river, but the distance was considerable and detection would have been too imminent. Another consideration caused me great concern, for the dead captain had told me that he knew me and intended to reveal my identity to the defenders of the town. If he did know me, and I was quite certain that he did, how had he learned it? Must it not have been from others, and in this very place? I had a disquieting feeling of enemies unseen about me, and was convinced that every additional moment that I spent in the town was the more unhealthy. I was naturally in a fever of impatience to get away; not for my own sake, particularly, though no man likes to be trapped like

a rat, but for that of my mission. That John should come with me, however, I was determined. It seemed to me, in my morbid state of mind, that in not accompanying him to the lake shore that night of my voluntary departure and his unwilling one, that I was in a measure responsible for sending him to the death which his half-brother's devilish ingenuity was devising for him. I should stay by him to the end. If worst came to worst, I was resolved to despatch Cyrenus, with the information I had gained to the Harbor, and myself remain for whatever might come.

With the fear of discovery that had arisen within me, I watched suspiciously for any signs that I was detected. None were apparent, but I knew the bolt might descend at any moment out of a clear sky.

Just then I felt the compelling influence of the human eye. I turned. Cyrenus stood at a little distance. He sauntered behind a boathouse. I strolled casually in that direction and we found ourselves secure from observation.

"I have found where John is," he told me cautiously. His manner showed an odd exaltation, born doubtless of the successful issue of his affair of the previous night and the good fortune, thus far, of his present one.

"You lost no time," I commented, with eager satisfaction. "Where is he?"

"Not in the fortress, as I supposed," he answered, "but in that old limestone building that stands about a quarter mile from it. You may have noticed it."

"Yes," I replied. "Years old, isn't it? Didn't

it formerly serve the purpose of a French prison? They're guarding him well, evidently."

"He's under ground," replied Cyrenus. "There's a dungeon there."

"How did you find out?" I asked.

"Sentry," he responded briefly. "My uniform is right now, you know, for this business. I asked fool questions as if I had a right to do it and he answered them like a fool. Seemed surprised that I didn't know it. Godfrey seems to be as noted on this side as on the other. Told him the truth, that I was a new arrival. He told me something curious about that place." He paused. I eyed him inquiringly.

"I don't understand it," he mused. "Sentry said that the building proper was put up by the English some years ago. When they dug for the foundations they came to a floor of thick stone. Proved to be the rock roof of this dungeon that is holding John at present. Well, they dug around it, finally locating the walls, which proved to be in natural rock in places and extended at the ends with rough masonry.

"After a good deal of trouble, they broke a passageway through one wall. They found the dungeon completely walled in, with no communication from the surface of the earth except a rude air shaft, that was well hidden, and not a sign of a clew to indicate where the entrance might be. They have searched everywhere for secret doors and springs and entrances and have never found them. What they did find, though, were chains fastened to the wall for prisoners and a heap of dry bones in the corner. The place is a mystery they have never been able to solve. There must

be an entrance somewhere, but the English were never able to find it, such was the ingenuity of the French who built the tomb, for it was nothing else in those old days. As it was, the English reconstructed the gap they had forced in the wall into a doorway and now use the dungeon as an adjunct to the building which they built over it. The French prison you heard of is that dungeon. Wherever that secret passage is, no prisoner whom the English have ever had there has been able to find it, and they are never afraid to put important captives in there, even though they know there must have been some hidden communication with it by the French in the old days. It is a strange thing."

I stared. "I should think it was," I muttered, for I had never heard of it. "We must consider getting John out," I resumed, after a pause. "I must see him."

"How will you manage it?" he inquired.

"Perhaps not at all," I responded, "though I shall try. I will visit headquarters and try to get a permit to see him. I shall say that I am anxious to see the man accused of being the renegade who fired the magazine at York, because I wish to see if he is the same man I met on the other side, who publicly boasted of some dark exploit in that battle. I shall represent that I desire to ascertain if possible, in a guarded way, what he knows about that unfortunate affair."

"Rather thin," commented Cyrenus, "but it may work. Of course, your being supposed to be a secret agent of theirs may make it appear more plausible. Well, try it, and meanwhile, I'll loaf around."

I left him, proceeding to headquarters. I engaged

in conversation with some officers there, conversing easily upon matters of which we were mutually informed. I spoke as much as was prudent of my pretended service in the king's behalf on the other side. We were on the best of terms. I felt reassured, for I was clearly not suspected yet, after all. My spirits rose.

"By the way," I finally observed, carelessly flicking away my cigar ash with a finger, "I hear you have the man who fired the powder magazine at Little York."

"We have the man who is accused of doing it," replied Major Stuart, who was temporarily in charge and being the officer whom I had addressed.

"Rather a finely shaded distinction," I commented, laughing. "I am only just arrived, you know. Is there any doubt of his guilt?"

"With all due respect to our arms," dryly responded the major, "the accuser looks more capable of having done it than the accused." One or two other officers nodded silent approval. I mentally followed suit.

"Who is the prisoner?" I asked carelessly. "And who accuses him?"

"The accused is one John Godfrey," he answered. "The accuser——"

"John Godfrey!" I exclaimed, straightening in my chair. "What sort of man is he, I mean in appearance?"

"He is a giant," with conviction, "both in size and strength. He was captured at the Harbor itself by Red Rolfe, so-called, with some of the red allies. They were engaged, at the time, in another mission of a rather strange nature." This last

with a peculiar smile. "Some of the allies are not yet fit for business," he added.

"I can readily believe that," I observed, "for I have seen the man. Indeed, I know him. I have met him at the Harbor, where, as you know, I held a commission for a time as a bona fide Yankee. Though he would be rather surprised to see me in this uniform."

I was debating how best to approach the delicate matter of securing leave to meet him when Major Stuart took the matter out of my hands.

"Would you like to see him?" he asked. "For we can have you conducted there, if you wish."

"Why, yes," I answered, rather doubtfully, though secretly exultant. "Though," I added whimsically, "I should not want to get too close to him with this uniform."

Major Stuart laughed. "Well," he said, "we would be glad to have you see him, if only to witness his surprise. You will be admitted to-night."

I had hoped it would be earlier, but concealing my disappointment, I changed the subject. After chatting with the officers a while longer, I took my leave.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

UNMASKED

Where was John's father all this time, I wondered. I felt that he must be far from Frontenac, for his fruitless visit to the Harbor was sufficient to assure me that had he heard of his son's plight and the monstrous charge lodged against him he would ere now have been here to move heaven and earth to extricate him from the difficulty. A little inquiry, made to a friend, apprised me that he was at Montreal. The villainous scheme of Rolfe was made plain. He had chosen his time well, and if he could compass John's death before the return of their father he would do it. Not if I could prevent it, I reflected grimly.

Once, in the late afternoon, I saw the fiend. I was standing in the door of the King's Inn when I caught sight of him walking down the opposite side of the street. The battered hat, the what-not uniform, the blotchy, bearded face, all these I caught with a shudder of repulsion, as I hastily withdrew from sight. In that instant he turned his head. Did I imagine it, or had he recognized and leered at me? I could not be sure, but the sight of him gave me a bad turn. I had hoped him miles away. I was deeply disturbed; his foul presence brought something like a premonition. I longed for night and the opportunity to plan with John for our departure.

Cyrenus I saw no more. In my overwrought state the fact produced keen irritation. What was he doing, I wondered. I wandered aimlessly about, keeping a sharp lookout for Red Rolfe, prepared to slip out of sight at his approach. However, I saw nothing more of him that day. I employed the afternoon in securing the rest of my data, but the time dragged. An evil something was in the air, a something I could not define. Perhaps it had to do with the corpse in the woods yonder.

I supped with the officers at the King's Inn. Afterward I lighted my pipe and strolled down to the docks. I noted a couple of men following at a little distance, keeping to my heels with strange persistence. Of course I could not swear that I was being followed, but what did it mean?

I returned to the inn, going into the taproom. It was still early, but there were many officers there. There was but little else to do in Frontenac just then. The indescribable hum of conversation sounded; wordless, unintelligible, in strange confusion. There was the scraping of chairs and the clinking of glasses; boisterous laughter, the banging of great fists upon shuddering tables. Mine weasel-faced host and his assistants scampered hither and yon like scared rabbits, breathless with business, while the scores mounted up like a balloon. I sat with some friends and some capital ale, when the door opened, and in walked the two men who I was convinced had been shadowing me. I made no sign, but the ale grew suddenly more bitter than the brewer ever intended it.

My potion finished, I was about to excuse myself and proceed to headquarters for my permit to visit John, when Major Stuart and a couple of other

officers I had met there entered the room, seating themselves at a table and ordering drinks. I arose, making my way to them. I saluted, addressing the major.

"You will recollect that you suggested my seeing the prisoner to-night, Major Stuart," I said. "I hope the visit will be profitable to us."

"Ah, yes, Lieutenant," he replied urbanely. "You shall see him presently, rest assured, and I am sure that your visit will prove profitable to us."

There was something sinister in his tone. What did it mean? I was afraid to answer, even to myself. I turned away, saluting, and rejoined my companions, a question knocking at my heart like wintry sleet tapping against a window. Did I fancy it, or was there a glance of swift significance exchanged between the major and the two men opposite me?

The buzz went on, the swigging of ale, the sipping of spirits, the loud laughter. I sat outwardly calm, but feeling as if I was being gradually hemmed in, closer and closer, by a living wall; as if a crisis were at hand.

Suddenly there came loud voices from outside, the tramping of many feet. The door was flung wide, and through it there strode a strange cortege whose coming brought a still hush; the tramp of a fearsome company who trod to the center of the room, and bending, laid a huddled something on the floor; a ghastly something at which men gazed with mouths agape and blanched faces, making no sound; a bloody something that seemed to emanate a deathly chill that struck to the hearts of all that watching company. For at the feet of wild, rollicking life had been laid the gray mask of death,

the cadaver of one who had been the most uproarious devil of them all. And the coming of that poor, cold clay back to the room where it had so often held unholy carnival, on the floor of which it now lay, blind, insensate, a thing of livid horror, exacted the tribute that must eternally be paid to the soul-quit temple, however desecrated—the tribute of stunned silence.

A moment so, and then there burst within the room a babel of sound, of helpless questioning, of vague surmise, of horror unrestrained.

"Chichester!"—"Murdered!"—"Who did it?"—"Poor drunken devil!"—"Where was he found?"—"Through the heart, eh?"—"I saw him last night."—"Good God!"

Major Stuart was bending over the body, which was surrounded. He raised his hand. "Silence!" he cried. "Stand back!" The red-coated rush ebbed, like out-bound tides, on either side.

"This looks like a so-called affair of honor," said the major. "I am informed that the body was found in the woods just outside the clearing, which has been used for a settlement of differences by king's men who should have had no differences. Is any man here responsible for that officer's death?"

There was no reply. I became conscious of a brutal face turned toward me; of cruel eyes, like a cat's peering into my own; of a coarse hand plucking in triumph at the red hairs of a coarser beard. He stood beside the body, which he had helped to carry in.

"Perhaps," he said, in those deep, musical tones of his that drew the attention of the entire roomful; "perhaps the lieutenant there knows of it. There are those here who will remember a —lively to-do

between him and the deceased on that very spot, two years gone."

They all stared at me. There was a strained silence.

"That quarrel was never renewed," I answered quietly. "At least, not in that way."

"Lieutenant," interposed Major Stuart, "did you kill that man?"

"I did not!" I rejoined with emphasis. The company murmured. "It matters little whether you did or not!" snarled Red Rolfe, shaking a swollen fist at me. "You'll hang anyway, you damned spy!"

"Spy!" I exclaimed angrily, "explain yourself!" But I went cold all over.

Again Major Stuart raised his hand. "I will explain, Lieutenant," he told me, while again that great room went still. "You are a brave man, sir, and I hope you may suffer an ignominious death like one. You have been watched for days, shadowed almost constantly since you left Montreal. Attempts to warn you during the past few days from your own side, have been diverted. Indeed, the knowledge has been confined but to a few of us. Your success, Captain," with a slight smile, as for the first time he recollected my proper title, "in befooling us these two years cannot but compel our admiration, but your course is all but run. You have, speaking literally, come to the end of your rope, for you know the stern penalty prescribed for such as you who are so unfortunate as to be detected. By a strange whim of nature, aided by the private papers of the man you have so successfully simulated, together with your own natural resource and daring, you have been enabled to obtain success

almost beyond belief. Only the merest accident has destroyed you. Can you guess it?"

"Some one, of course, has betrayed me," I replied, summoning a rather sorry smile, "though just now I am at a loss to guess the riddle."

"Did you not have dealings with suspicious characters on your own side?" suggested the officer. I started. "You mean——" I exclaimed.

"One Miles Osgood," he supplied. "He knew he was suspected and left just in time. Afterward," with a repressed sneer, "he became identified with the cohorts of our friend Rolfe here. I have understood he heard a conversation between you and your incarcerated friend yonder, near his hut at Sackets Harbor, whither he was stealing to secure some hidden funds of his, not long ago, which impelled him to try a shot at you. It resulted in his discomfiture, for you sent him to Watertown a prisoner. But in that conversation which he heard you let drop a remark regarding your sphere of effort which aroused his suspicion. Upon reaching the prison there he accidentally made a discovery, a discovery that was ordinarily well guarded against, which confirmed that suspicion. Miles, an old hand and accustomed to worming out of difficulties, managed to make his escape in time to keep an appointment with Red Rolfe here, and some of his allies. They, by the way, had by arrangement embarked for your shores the day prior to Osgood's escape. The object was a purely predatory one and what followed was an accident, though a fortunate one for us. Rolfe ran his schooner one dark night up your bay and cunningly left it concealed in a cleverly arranged screen of greenery in

an unfrequented deep spot close to shore. There it remained unmolested till the crew were ready to return. Osgood escaped just in time to join the band on its arrival, which he had arranged to do. He encountered Rolfe in the forest near Fish Island and told him of you and also of his discovery in the Watertown prison. It did not take Rolfe long to grasp the situation. Osgood, under cover, shadowed you for a day or two, for the two had determined to make a double coup before returning. The Watertown prison was to afford one captive and you, Captain, were to be the other. Osgood followed you from Watertown upon a night you will remember to the rendezvous you had appointed for an expected messenger. He had learned that this was to be the place. Red Rolfe and his allies were to proceed there from their post in the woods near Fish Island. Osgood was concealed in the ruins of a cabin nearby. He grew impatient, not knowing if Rolfe had intercepted the messenger, as he intended doing, and fearing that the envoy would arrive and that you would give him the papers and leave before you could be captured. Moreover, he wondered why Rolfe did not arrive. He left the cabin, took a good look to be sure it was yourself, and was then about to slip into the forest to see if he could discover Rolfe when you heard him and turned. I understand they buried him as a result of the encounter."

"I believe so," I returned, "though the encounter was perhaps not in itself directly responsible. I wish it had been."

The major smiled. "I can appreciate your feelings, Captain," he said. "It is somewhat ruffling to learn that we have been duped when it appeared as

if we were on solid ground. At any rate, you escaped the programme arranged for you for the time being. Rolfe arrived too late to be of any assistance to his friend. There was no one there, though he looked about carefully. He encountered the messenger later, on his way to the rendezvous, and explained to him how we had all been tricked for so long. After that your detection was only a question of time. It was necessary only to keep quiet and use discretion. Rolfe learned of the fate of his assistant later, for it was talked among the soldiers and came to the ears of some of his men."

So it was Red Rolfe that I had seen on the brink of the cliff that night. As I remembered it now, the figure had looked oddly squat and familiar. And the dead man had told me he had escaped only that night! Ah! stupid dupe that I had been! I had blindly run my own head into the halter.

"But you will remember, Captain," pursued the major, "that I mentioned that from Osgood, Red Rolfe here had learned of a prisoner at Watertown, confined there for two long years and more, and of the peculiar circumstances connected therewith. A day or two after his ineffectual attempt to capture you, he and his men made their way undetected through the woods to Watertown. That night there was a jail delivery that was not discovered till the next day, so cleverly was it managed. In that same night, following a breakneck trip on borrowed horses to the spot where the schooner was secreted, Rolfe picked up the friend to whom I promised you this morning that you should to-night be conducted, though this was quite by accident. Rolfe had managed the delivery I have referred to with a few picked men, leaving the bulk of the band in

the vicinity of the hidden schooner. Your friend heard them talking and investigated, chancing to step into the midst of them. They knew him, it seems, and he at once had his hands full of Indians. I believe they also had their hands full of him. However, when Rolfe arrived with his assistants and the freed prisoner your large friend was secured and ready for him. A serious charge rests against him, for Rolfe has many witnesses, and I fear you are likely to meet death together.

"In the schooner that sailed out of your bay that night, there was, in addition to your friend, another passenger, one whom these gentlemen have never seen, but one they will welcome. He is here." He beckoned toward the outer shadows.

I knew whom I should see. I remembered a fierce encounter in gathering dusk, a recoil of mutual amazement, a struggle and a stern chase, the final capture of a gallant foe. After that, a prisoner doomed to execution and spared by a warm hearted general at the united petition of his two captors; a prisoner confined secretly for two long years, while I assumed his role with a bravado that, after all, was not so reckless as it seemed—till now. For now, from the outer shadows into the candlelight there stepped and stood confronting me, amid bewildered stares and gasps of incredulous amazement—my counterpart!

The same height and carriage, the same eyes, hair and features, the startling sameness even to the red uniform he wore. There was a breathless silence, broken by Major Stuart's sarcastic voice.

"Lieutenant Percy Stranahan," said he ironically, "allow me to re-present to you one whom I believe you have met previously, Captain Gilbert

Warburton, at present of the Secret Service of the U. S. A., in a word, your double, whom I fear must shortly die."

"The latter contingency," responded the young officer, and sincerity rang in his tone, "would be most genuinely regrettable. I shall do what I can to make it impossible." And our hands met.

"The third fall?" queried I. "Do you remember it? Well, you have won it. I bear you no malice."

"I am sorry," he replied earnestly. "It is the fortune of war. Believe me, if I can aid you——"

"As you say, it is the fortune of war," I interrupted. "It is now as God wills. In the meantime, Lieutenant Stranahan," I added, with, I trust a little of the sang froid which the situation demanded, "Allow me to congratulate you upon being no longer nameless. I take pleasure in returning to you your name,—which has served me better here previously than my own is serving me now,—and with it these documents that gave my assumption of it some needed plausibility." I bowed and placed his papers, which I always carried for convenience's sake, in his hand.

Major Stuart made a sign. A file of soldiers, who had evidently been in waiting outside, entered, surrounding me. I caught sight of Cyrenus near the door, an enigmatical expression on his leathery face, the sour smile on his lips. The file moved, my luckless self in the midst. Through the gaping crowd I went, past the huddled heap on the floor, by the wizened Cyrenus and the leering Rolfe, into the outer darkness, to join John.

CHAPTER XXXIX

CYRENUS SMITES THE ROCK

Through the town we went, down the long walk, our steps ringing on the flagstones, the gabble of a pursuing throng sounding in our ears. Presently we turned upon a less frequented street, and, after some minutes' walk, came to the old gray building, ghostly in the moonlight. We descended some stone steps, passing a few posted sentries, and advanced to a massive door, upon which the sergeant in charge of my escorting detail knocked sharply. It swung open ponderously with the rasping turn of a key from within and the rattle of released chains. We stepped inside and the door banged to, shutting us off from the curious stare of the crowd without. We found ourselves in a dark passage, with nothing visible in the gloom. The sergeant bawled for a lantern. Soon one appeared, borne by a slouchy, red-faced soldier in his shirt sleeves. We walked to the end of the passage and paused, while the lantern bearer unbarred a great, iron-ribbed door.

It swung open, creaking on rusted hinges. There came a damp mouldy breath from the regions below, coldly pestilential. We descended some stone steps, preceded by the lantern bearer, whose light showed wanly ahead, a sickly yellow splotch in the

dark. It was very dismal. I caught myself wondering when I should ascend those steps again.

At the bottom we traversed an uneven stretch of floor, formed, I judged, from the solid rock. I stumbled once or twice over unseen projections, being jerked none too gently to my feet by my escort.

We descended six more steps. There was the rattling of chains, the scrape of a huge key, and I was shoved forward to join John.

I found myself in a large, noisome, oblong hole, rockribbed below and above and with chill gray walls, also of massive rock, which reeked with dampness. The air was foul, telling of a mockery of ventilation, and there were great rusty rings and shackles set in the floor and the thick walls, though I was glad to see they were not in use.

Seated on a low, wooden stool in a corner, as I entered, was a great, huddled figure. He rose as we came in, towering by a head over the tallest man in the company. Dazzled by the dull glare of the lantern, his eyes blinked owlishly for an instant, then became widened as they rested on me.

"Captain Godfrey," said the sergeant, with some sarcasm, "Captain Warburton wished this morning to be conducted to you. The king's men are always obliging. Here he is. I trust you will keep merry company until we lead you forth together to be jerked God-ward from the same scaffold."

He stood grinning at us, surrounded by his mates, while we silently regarded each other; amazement in his eyes, heaven knows what in my own, for they were misty. The light, perhaps. It was such a miserable end to it all!

The sergeant's voice again sounded, rumbling hollowly in that grim hole.

"Doubtless you two will want to gaze at each other," he said. "It would be a pity to leave a couple of such luckless devils in the dark on the night of their reunion. Leave the lantern, Tom," addressing the man who had lighted us hither, "and chase up for another to get back with. I can't find my way out over these blasted stones without one."

This was considerate and I thanked him. He grunted gruffly, while we heard the slouchy Thomas cursing as he stumbled up through the gloom for the lantern. Presently he returned with one, and the squad left the dungeon, banging the heavy door behind them. We heard the slipping of bolts and the rattling of chains. Then the footsteps grew fainter, till at length came silence.

We gripped hands, searching each other's eyes. His own, staring wistfully out of a face that was already chalky with a deadly prison pallor, and covered with a beard grown unkempt in his confinement, held a puzzled questioning.

"How, in God's name, Gilbert," he began,—"but first, have you your pipe with you, or did they take it? I haven't had a smoke since my latest fraternal encounter, which resulted as you see."

I still had one and produced it, together with my tobacco pouch. John filled up and leaned back against the wall on his stool, puffing contentedly. "Tell me about it, Gilbert," said he, with half-closed eyes.

I did so from the beginning, "And they plan a bird-like ending for me, as you heard, in the air," I concluded dryly.

"What a lark for them," he observed, and his

eyes twinkled. "I gather also that they intend the same for me. Did you happen to hear on what charge? I am rather curious."

"Have you not heard?" I asked him in surprise. Truly the ways of his captor had been invested with a most diabolic cunning and reserve.

"Why, no," he replied. "Until the moment of the sergeant's recent cheering assurance, I should not have known that I was accounted more than an ordinary prisoner of war, though I confess this extreme solicitude for my safe keeping has struck me as somewhat significant."

"Your amiable kinsman, Red Rolfe, for such I prefer to call him," I replied grimly, "has lodged an accusation against you. He charges you with being an English renegade who fired the magazine at York. He means to have you hanged."

His white face grew awful to gaze upon. A moment he sat in silence, then he spoke, only three livid, hissing words. And to me, sitting there in silence, the curse of that wronged, doomed giant arose to the Throne as a justified, burning prayer.

John arose after a time and paced the cell like a caged beast, his eyes blazing, his great hands clenched, muttering hot maledictions, shaking impotent fists, while I watched him dumbly. All the murderous resentment of his ruined life, all the rancor of a heart burning with bitterness, flamed in his face and dropped, white-hot, from his lips. After a while he stopped in his rapid walk, throwing himself upon his pallet, one end of which I occupied. The sickly flame of the lantern threw a strange glow upon his white face, now calming, giving little sign of the storm that had shaken him.

"Ah, well," he said, with a bitter laugh, "this

does no good." He paused a moment. "But it's hard to die like dogs, you and I, Gilbert," he resumed, "when we've everything to live for, and to be done to death by him! Think of it! To think that you and I must die in the coils of a snake like him. I should have killed him long ago, but I would have had to gone gloved, Gilbert, after my hands were stained with his black blood. They would never bleach out. They would be like those of Black Julius; you remember him?" He laughed harshly.

"I wonder where my precious father is?" he continued sarcastically, "my father who was once a fool? I wonder if he yet appreciates the enormity of his foolishness? 'As ye sow, so shall ye reap.' His seed fell on good ground, didn't it? And I'm wallowing in the thorns and thistles. Hark, what was that?"

There was an odd, scraping sound, seeming to come from under my feet. A moment it lasted, then ceased. "Rats," I commented, but he shook his head.

"This is a queer place," he observed, "it seems to be independent of the rest of the building."

I told him what Cyrenus had said in regard to it.

"It is peculiar," he mused, "and hard to credit. If there ever was a secret entrance, it must have been disposed of long ago. Can you see any sign, however dim, of such a doorway to freedom? I have examined this place quite thoroughly myself."

I shook my head mournfully and a dim hope died. But now there came a new sound, that of approaching footsteps from without. Then there was a rattle, the dungeon door swung open, and into the cell stepped, pale and agitated, John's father,

he whom I had assisted so recently, at the time of need, in Sackets Harbor.

The men remained a breathless moment, staring into one another's faces. The old officer was a handsome stalwart man of over six feet. His hair and beard were gray. There was a strong resemblance between them, though the father's eyes were blue. Just now they were full of trouble. He gazed, across the gap of years, at the unsmiling face of his son, with mute appeal. He seemed not to notice me, his eyes only for his boy.

"Take a seat," said John finally, indicating almost anywhere about the nearly bare floor with the sweep of his arm. "To what am I indebted for the honor of this visit? The accommodations here are few, but such as I have you are welcome to. I had not thought to see you again, except it be perhaps in the crowd I should face from the scaffold."

The older man winced as from a blow. "I have but a few minutes; they are very strict," he said hurriedly. "I came from Montreal as soon as I heard. For my sake, for your dead mother's sake, boy, forgive the past!"

John's face grew stern. "Do not mention my mother, sir," he said bitterly. "You——"

"Stop!" cried his father, positive torture in his face. "Have I not suffered from the beginning, more horribly than you can ever know? Do I not suffer still? My conscience is all I can bear; do not add to the burden!"

"Why did you believe my brother?" with a writhing lip. "That day I left England, do you recollect it? Why were you so willing to swallow the lie he rammed down your throat? Why, you

thought that I, instead of he, had robbed you?" There was deep scorn in his tone.

"I was thrice a fool," miserably answered the elder man, with downcast head. From my soul I pitied him. "I was morbid in regard to my sin and hoped, weakly, as I know to my cost, to remedy it in some small measure. And you,—you had been wild, you know, and he was very smug in those days. He deceived me. The gnat and the camel."

"I was always frank," returned the son, "in sin as well as in sobriety! And he,—why, his dog's face, man!—had you no eyes?"

"I was blind—blind!" he answered, and shook like a reed.

John's stern face relaxed somewhat. "Ah, well," he muttered dryly, "it's a tale that is nearly told. We are all puppets pulled by strings, and Fate holds them. Mine and Gilbert's here will be about the neck, that is all. Others have danced the hangman's jig. You and I, Gilbert, will have to execute some new steps on that festive occasion.

The man opposite him shuddered, his face showing gray in the dim light.

"Tell me," pursued John, "how you learned I was alive and here. Your knowledge is a source of some surprise to me, as my personality has been veiled quite as completely as the face of an Eastern bride for some years past."

"I saw you at Little York," answered the old man humbly. "It was when you were embarking to leave for Sackets Harbor. I was wounded in the engagement and was in bed in a house near the lake shore. I would know you anywhere. Ill as I was, I hobbled to the door calling to you, but you did not hear me. Afterward I learned under what

name you were living and of your fame in the forest and your record with the army yonder. I was and am proud of you. I sent you messages, but I judge you never received them."

"No," replied John, "I never have." His mood was softening, and I was glad, for I pitied the gray old man with the wistful blue eyes.

"Once," continued the father, "I went to Sackets Harbor to see you. I was in disguise. It was risky, but I wanted to find you. You were away on some mission. I was forced to return unsuccessful. I should have fared ill there had it not been for the kindness of a young officer, a Captain Warburton, who contrived to get me away safely. I learned by accident in Montreal of your incarceration here, through a letter received by an acquaintance, and came as quickly as possible."

"Captain Warburton," replied John, "is also in trouble. He finds himself in a tight box, indeed as tight a one as do I. Our cases are equally dubious."

"Warburton in trouble? How so?" inquired the old officer. "To what plight do you refer?"

John beckoned me from the dim corner, where I had withdrawn at the meeting of the two, into the lantern light. "Do you recognize this gentleman?" he asked.

Major Aberdeen glanced toward me for the first time. "Why, young man!" he exclaimed. "How come you to be here, and in company with my son?"

"It is the result of a division of identities," replied John, with a slight smile, and briefly explained the strange circumstances of our mutual capture of my double, of my assumption of the role, the ensuing operations and my final discomfiture, forbearing, however, as yet to state the identity of the

man who had returned with the real Stranahan whose appearance had capped the climax at the King's Inn a little while before. The major himself made the inquiry.

"Who brought back the real Stranahan?" he asked. Then with a searching glance at me, he exclaimed: "For genuine, impudent daring I have never heard anything to excel this! I had often heard of Stranahan, the Stranahan who was yourself, sir. He was accounted most capable and efficient by us of this side. And how cleverly you managed it at Sackets Harbor! I never entertained a suspicion of you."

"It is over now," I smiled ruefully, "though I think I did fairly well while I was alive, for Stranahan is now dead as far as I am concerned."

"The man who betrayed Gilbert here, through the affair yonder, is the man who betrayed me," said John, eyeing his father curiously. "You know doubtless of the charge against me?"

"Yes," replied the old man, "but I do not believe it."

"Thank you," said John, a trifle ironically. "Do you happen to know of the identity of my accuser?"

"No," responded his father, "I have not chanced to hear, nor have inquired."

"It is the man who has undone Warburton; it is the man seen by Gilbert and myself to have himself committed the deed," said John, quietly but with kindling eyes. "A man in whom you and I have a common interest. In a word, Red Rolfe."

The old man sat stunned, with stony, horrified face. "God have mercy!" he ejaculated in odd, muffled tones. The cruel wave of his early sin beat back upon him across the gray years.

There sounded impatient movements without, the shuffling of feet. He sprang up.

"My time is up," he said, agitatedly but low. "I must go, but I will move mountains to save you, my boy, and Captain Warburton also, if possible," as we clasped hands warmly, for I felt as kindly toward him as his own impulse was toward me. "I can only do my best," he pursued, with emotion, "but you may both rest assured that the best will be exerted. I will see Provost, every one,——" as the door swung open, "and now,—God bless you, my son, will you——" and he put forth a hesitant hand.

It was gripped with a force that gave me a satisfying thrill. A moment they stood, gazing deep into each other's eyes, and then he was gone and the great door clanged. That last instant made me glad in the after years.

For some moments after the sound of the retreating footsteps had died away we sat in silence. I watched him, his sombre face half in the dim light of the lantern, half in the shadow.

"He may be able to help us," he said slowly, "and yet,——" and he shook his head sadly. I knew he thought of me.

Into the succeeding silence there crept a sound; cautious, vague, insistent. John lifted his hand. "Listen!" he breathed. "Am I growing crazy, or can you hear it, too? I have been hearing it all day."

We crept toward the end of the dungeon, bending over a spot which gave forth a vague alarm. For beneath the solid stone slabs on which we stood, there came a curious fumbling, an insistent tapping certainly produced by no prowling rodents.

John and I peered into each other's faces with a strained expectancy. What was it that we heard? Did it augur good, or more of ill? That some one was at work beneath us was certain. Below us was the baffling secret entrance. Did an enemy seek to enter it, or a friend?

Now the sounds ceased and we caught a soft-breathed curse under us, vague and far away. A moment more and there came the impact of solid, heavy blows, striking upward against the stone floor. Several muffled thuds, and then——

A great slab lifted upward, wavered a moment, and then fell backward, exposing the maw of a black hole. An instant later, while we crouched in silence by the opening, out of it was stretched a hand holding a lantern, which it set upon the floor. Then there appeared out of the gap the head and shoulders of a man. A face, leathery and quizzical, surveyed us; the face of Cyrenus.

CHAPTER XL

TRAIL OF THE GRAND SEIGNEUR

We grasped the little man and drew him out of the gateway he had created. Truth to tell, we nearly cracked his ribs for him.

"Let be! let be!' he gasped, trying to squirm away. "Let me breathe, I tell you! What's the matter with you?"

We finally released him. "Where did you come from?" I asked in deep amazement.

"I'll tell you later," he answered. "First thing to do is to get out of here," he observed, drawing deep breaths and ruefully rubbing his ribs. "Won't be healthy to dodder around here. If they should catch us, there'd be three of us to do the ghost dance instead of two."

His little eyes, sharp as a ferret's, wandered around the cell, his thin lips curving in their sour smile. "Fine quarters, these!" he ejaculated. "They'll wonder what you've changed them for."

"But this will show them the route we take for the new ones," observed John, indicating the hole.

Cyrenus grinned. "Not when we've got the lid on," he rejoined. "Do you suppose that if you've been in here all this time without finding it, that your landlord will be able to do it? Besides, if he did, which he won't, it wouldn't help him any. He'd have to come the same way I did to open it, and

I'll bet he won't find the route. There's no spring on the inside here," he added, chuckling. "Just look at that stone a minute, will you?"

We examined it. It was a ragged, solid slab, similar to the other blocks that formed the floor and very thick—thicker in fact than its fellows, as we observed now that the unsuspected gap appeared. Crosswise, on either side and close to the bottom of the slab, large holes had been drilled completely through it. We noticed that the edges of these were red with rust, evidently just disturbed.

"When that stone is in place,' explained Cyrenus, "a couple of thick iron bars pass through these holes and extend under the floor on each side, for a short distance, into small crevices in the rock under us. The passage is very narrow beneath us, and it is a mean place to work in," he commented reminiscently. "When the stone is down, the bars slip through, the projecting ends holding the block, thrust under the neighboring slabs as they are, so that no power could raise it from above, even if they knew it could be moved, which they don't. It's a snug fit," he added, ruefully regarding a pair of bruised hands. That bar slides in under so that there isn't a fraction of an inch of leeway from above. The bars hadn't been moved in years, and I had the devil's own time starting them, for they were rusted. I've been working all day."

"So it was you I heard!" exclaimed John.

"None else," he answered. "I'll tell you about it when we get out of this. That's the next thing. You two get down in here." He pushed us toward the opening. "I'll raise the stone on edge so we

can tip it down over us. We can all get under it and adjust it. It fits like a glove. Stuck so I had to pound it with the second bar after I got it out. Hadn't been used for a long time. That's why it stuck."

"The lanterns!" I exclaimed.

Cyrenus grasped his. Leave yours there," he answered dryly. "They'll be looking for you inside it in the morning, if not earlier."

And indeed, I have no doubt they did, for our disappearance that night produced the most profound sensation that Frontenac has ever known. Confusion reigned, I learned afterward, when our incomprehensible escape was discovered. They ransacked the dungeon from floor to ceiling and never found the avenue of escape, because they never hit upon the strange approach to it from the outer world, of which that generation knew nothing. Indeed, I make no doubt that no Englishman ever did, unless he were luckless enough to be incarcerated there, long years before, when his countrymen and the French were by the ears, being secretly seized and taken surreptitiously through that dark passage to his subterranean doom. For I am certain, though the history of that grim old dungeon, now crumbling in ruins, is and then was enshrouded in sinister mystery, that I know something of its purposes. For tradition tells strange tales of the period of unrest that accompanied the intrigues and storms occasioned by the presence of the rival English and French as claimants of Canada; tales of strange disappearances, of mysterious gaps where there had formerly been arrogant Englishmen, and I doubt not that the dungeon held many hopeless

secrets that were later hidden forever in the river beyond. In time the old order gave place to the new, and the French, lapsing into quietude, withdrew and left England to quarrel,—for England must ever quarrel with some one,—with us, of her own flesh, to the south. In time, through a strange trick of fate, a British prison was erected on the very spot, and the presence of the buried dungeon was discovered and the grim cell made to do duty for Englishmen. But the latter had never learned the secret of the place, the strange avenue upon which Cyrenus had stumbled by a God-sent accident. It was a horrifying thing, this secret egress of which the captive knew but could not avail himself. One could readily imagine how he must have suffered the tortures of the condemned. Perhaps a mysterious reaching out and a plucking from the living; a weary death in life in the depths. Then finally the dark, subterranean path to oblivion and a dreary blotting out, with the awful details hid forever from the world. Not a pleasant picture, but that tortuous, black tunnel told of past dramas, whispered of sealed horrors, shuddered with a pestilential breath of the dead long ago.

If the hidden history of that grim grave could be known, I am convinced that many a thrilling chapter would stir the pulses of the world. However that may be, the flitting of John and me that night, blown, in a moment, like gray vapors, out of the British ken, furnished a sensation which shook Frontenac to its foundations and brought the superstitious ungodly among the soldiery whimpering to the anxious seat. At first the entire squad that had charge of us, were suspected, albeit they

were trusted men, of aiding our escape. Things might have gone seriously with them, had not they been able to prove the next day, by unimpeachable authority, a perfect alibi from any connivance in our interest. All Frontenac then wondered what occult power had resolved two stalwart prisoners into thin air that drifted through a chink or two out into the night, and—for that tradition lives—the generations wonder yet. I smile as I think that if these poor memoirs of mine should ever see the light of day, what a flocking there would be to that gray ruin to find the hidden passage; of the thunder of the powder train that would be laid to bare the secret. And I wonder if the reverberations of that thunder, echoing afar, would not steal across the white water to Cyrenus, sleeping in the village churchyard, to the very spot where he lies dreaming in his grave, and if the shadow of a sour smile would not cross the drifted dust of his face!

Mindful of haste, John and I obeyed Cyrenus and dropped into the hole. A moment he stood, looking about him. Then, poising the stone, he followed us. We stood crouched in a black, damp tunnel, low ceilinged and reeking with a heavy, musty odor of dead air.

"Lower the stone," said Cyrenus softly, his voice sounding weirdly in that strange place, "and fit it over."

We soon had it in position. Then, with some little difficulty, we shoved the iron bars through into place, clinching the stone for the last time, in all probability, that human hands would touch it.

We started, Cyrenus leading with the lantern. A few steps further on, the passage grew narrower

and lower. We had to walk doubled over at an uncomfortable angle. The lantern ahead threw a faint glow, revealing dimly slimy black walls, rough and dripping with moisture. The course was downward. The rock beneath was wet and slippery. We slipped and sprawled about as we progressed but our spirits made of the path a velvet carpet.

"You come out way below the town," called Cyrenus. "I think this part runs close to the harbor. We are very deep down. I stole a boat after supper. It's a few miles above the town, hidden in a cove on the lake shore, a place I know. It was safer there. I had it taken there by a man I can trust, who is in sympathy with us. We'll make Sackets in her if we're lucky. We'll have to make a detour through the forest around the town. It's ticklish, but the only way."

The roof grew higher. We walked now nearly erect. The tunnel was ascending.

As we continued, Cyrenus told us, with odd chucklings, how he had stumbled upon his strange discovery. "It was an accident,' he explained. "I was walking along the side of the river when a part of the bank gave way with me. I landed plump in the water, but I had my eyes open, and—but you'll see in a minute. It was early this morning, I saw I had hit something as soon as I got inside. There were some dry pine knots just within the entrance, must have been there for years, with flint and steel. Must have had 'em constantly on hand. I got one going and kept on, for I was mighty curious. I came to the end and noticed that iron bar arrangement. Of course, I didn't know where I was, when, all of a sudden, I heard some one bellowing over

my head like a bull. It was you, Captain Godfrey, and you were singing," with a reproachful note in his voice. "I ought to have left you to hang after that, especially as it was some cussed love song." I felt rather than saw John's blush.

"But," continued the little man, "I examined that bar and tried moving it, but it was no go. I wanted to get it open so you could get out to-night, as it was a safer time. I had to go back to barracks to sneak some tools to work with, marking the place so I could find it again, for it's a blind spot. I worked several hours at the bars and finally got 'em started. Then I went back for awhile, for it wouldn't do to be absent too long. After supper I got the lantern and then waited around awhile to see Captain Gilbert nabbed," with a grin back at me. "Then I came back and finally got the bars out. Thought I'd never do it.

"You'll have to crawl here," he called back. "The passage is small for a way. The opening's about a hundred feet on."

We bent, obedient to the hint, and in a moment were crawling on hands and knees down a sharp descent. We wormed along like snails, the rough stones bruising our palms and knees, anxious only for the outer world. Suddenly the passage widened and the next instant we had slipped into shallow water. Cyrenus was standing erect near us.

"Here you wade a few steps,' said he. The lantern preceded us, then suddenly disappeared. All was black.

A couple of steps more and we encountered a wall of rock as we stood in the water. Reaching out, I felt my arm slip beneath it. Calling

cautiously to John, I lowered my head and brushed under it. Then, pushing through a dense clump of bushes that fringed the opening, I stepped out into freedom, John following. Cyrenus was there awaiting us.

Above us was the starlit glory of the sky. We stood, close inshore, in the current, that rolled in dark, wide majesty, of the mighty St. Lawrence.

CHAPTER XLI

A CRY IN THE NIGHT

Leaving the water, we climbed up a steep bank which was grown over generously with shrubbery reaching clear down to the water's edge. Looking back after a few paces, we could not distinguish the place from which we had emerged, hidden in the bushes which effectually screened it. Small wonder, indeed, that the egress to that mysterious dungeon was not known in Frontenac. Nature had most cunningly arranged it. As I climbed up the bank I wondered under what circumstances it had been first discovered and speculated upon the construction of the dungeon we had left. From its rough, unfinished appearance I had thought, soon after entering it, that it was an enlarged cave, transformed by workmen, long years since, into the grim cell that had held us, and others before us. Men could work under there, with the rocky materials to hand, and the world overhead would never know of it.

Arrived at the crest of the bank, we found ourselves in the deep forest that skirted the river's edge, at that time, almost continuously, save for the few intervening towns, from the lake to the sea. Cyrenus pointed a little way above, where the overhanging bank of soft forest soil had crumbled.

"It was there I went down," he said, "and if I hadn't fallen directly in that spot below us, you

two would still be cooling your heels yonder. And I guess I'd not been able to do much for you except to gape at your hanging, and, I hope, bring back a good account of your end to Sackets."

"Cyrenus, you're a brick!" John averred, reaching for him. Cyrenus evaded the grasp with positive terror. "No, you don't," he said. "I haven't breathed right since I broke in on you two."

We had been advancing through the woods. There came, close at hand, a low whine.

"Wait a minute," exclaimed Cyrenus, "I nearly forgot him." He slipped back through the trees for a moment, then there came bounding toward us a vague, black shape that brought up with a crash against John's legs, leaping up into his face with low whines and lapping tongue, a severed rope flying about his neck as be gamboled.

"Gypso, by all that's holy!" exclaimed John, hugging the animal. "Why, how did he get here?"

Cyrenus explained the hound's coming to Frontenac. "I brought him down this afternoon and tied him yonder with some provender," he added. "Thought we'd want to bring him back with us."

He extinguished the lantern and dropped it. "We are not far from the town," he explained softly, "and we can't afford to take any chances. We must go north and then head west, to pass the town through the forest. It's dark in the woods, but we can't take the chances of a light. We can skirt the clearings close enough to keep our bearings. We must hurry, for I want to get to that boat to-night. There is a trail on the other side that leads to the cabin of a queer little miser, a Frenchman, yonder, and from there it is only a short distance to the lake and the spot where I

hid the boat. We can make time after we work around to that trail. Come on, and, John, you keep that dog still."

A word was all the animal needed, seasoned veteran that he was. He glided softly after John, who led us, noiseless as a shadow. We proceeded in the darkness with a speed that would have appeared incomprehensible to a novice, for we were all experienced woodsmen. Since his arrival from England, Cyrenus had spent considerable time in the forest and was thoroughly at home in it, and as for John and me, it had always been for us the best loved of habitations. So we glided on, dark patches in the gloom, keeping close to the fringe, ready to slip like shadows into the deeper murk if molested. Arrived at a safe point beyond the town, we veered to the westward, working our way over rotting logs, through snares of twisted vines and brambles, diving under low, spreading branches and climbing over an occasional abattis of fallen, dead timber that barred our way. Occasionally we came to streams, finding them all possible to wade save one, which we swam. We were unencumbered with weapons except Cyrenus, who swam with a pistol in his teeth and a knife in his belt. My own had, of course, been taken from me. Shoulder to shoulder with John, across the black water, still beneath the stars, moved the dog.

Regaining the shore, we proceeded on till we had reached a point above the town, then we again turned, this time to the south, to reach the trail of which Cyrenus had spoken. We found the going easier, passing swiftly along, close to the wood's

edge, keeping a sharp lookout meanwhile for interruptions. None occurred, however, and in a short time we were on the very spot where, two years before, I had stood while the dusk gathered, surveying the town which I was about to enter as a spy. I looked toward Frontenac that I was now leaving, still as a spy, but now known for what I was and with the noose itching for my neck. The town sprawled before me, gray and cold in the moonlight, the limestone buildings squatting in graven, sturdy silence. Not far away, over toward the fort, I could see the prison we had lately quitted. Evidently no alarm had yet been given. As it was already past midnight, our escape would hardly be discovered until the morning, when we should be well on our way toward home, for we marked with satisfaction the blowing of a favoring wind which rustled in the branches over us.

"The boat I stole is a traveler," chuckled Cyrenus, as we started up the trail. "She's cut right. The man who owns her is dead drunk. He won't know she's gone till about tomorrow night. They can't stop us."

We hastened along the tortuous trail at a pace far more rapid than the one I had taken in approaching Frontenac on that long previous day.

Suddenly the dog, which was ahead, uttered a muttered growl, and, with his nose to the ground, stole forward stealthily. With caution quickened, we crouched behind him, waiting breathlessly. The dog evidently had some fresh scent.

Then, faint to our ears, there came an awful sound, an agonized cry from far ahead. It was the voice of a man in mortal torment. The dog, with another growl, bounded forward. "He's heard that

sound before!" growled John, as we began running, all three, in pursuit.

On we ran along the crooked trail, the cries nearing now, wild with terror and wringing pain. Out into the little clearing we came. There was a rude cabin there, a cabin I remembered. From inside there pealed another of those horrible shrieks. A growl sounded in reply; we noted the dog, crouched before the closed door, hackles up, whining and scratching to get in. John, who led us, lowered his great head and plunged toward the heavy door. One brawny shoulder struck it broadside. It reeled, shattered, falling inward. Over it and into the room the giant leaped, the hound following and Cyrenus and I bringing up the rear.

CHAPTER XLII

INTO THE SHADOW AND BEYOND

On a rude table, bound to it with ropes, lay the half nude body of Jacques Pitou. The poor, pinched face of the miserable little miser was contorted with suffering. It was a ghastly yellow, like the teeth that protruded from under thin lips that grinned like a dog's under the exquisite torture which the wretch was undergoing.

Surrounding the writhing body stood Red Rolfe and a half dozen of his savages. They turned sharply as we entered. On the repellent face of the leader, inflamed with the drink that so plainly explained his presence, so close to the town, on so inhuman a mission, appeared a mingled expression of hatred and incredulous dismay.

"You!" he snarled, backing away as if we had been ghosts. "Both of you! God! How came you here? Traitors in Frontenac, eh?"

"No, you red-handed scoundrel!" answered John, his black eyes smouldering. "If there are any of your black breed there, we did not meet them!"

"My black breed, indeed!" sneered the other, his deep voice harsh with anger. "That from you! You who fight against the flag under which you were born!"

"And which you dishonor," answered John, with writhing lip. "It owns you as an ally only by

sufferance. Its real defenders despise you. The rag of piracy is a fit flag for you!"

The other, white with passion, dropped a hand upon the hilt of a knife on the table where the bound miser lay moaning feebly. Pitou's body was bleeding from a score of tiny gashes. The sickening odor of burned flesh was overpowering. I noticed for the first time, with horror, the blackened soles of his bare feet, cruelly scorched. It was the old story over again; the drink-crazed tormentors with their devilish cruelties; the inhuman attempt to extort from the old man the secret hiding place of his real or imagined wealth; the sealed lips of the sufferer, silent either through the triumph of cupidity over a tortured body, or because he had in reality nothing to impart. For the past few years, his proximity to Frontenac and the fact that Rolfe was busy with other evil matters and had temporarily forgotten him, had left him unmolested. But a lull had come in the tide of Rolfe's affairs, the poor wretch's retreat had been discovered, rum had banished caution, and Rolfe must have his holiday, and,—if there be any,—the money. We saw what we saw with gleaming eyes and hands that were hungry for the feel of the throats opposite.

John noticed the bravo's clutch at the knife. His voice rang out, biting, vibrant with scorn.

"Take it and run me through, coward!" he cried. "I am not armed. Well, why don't you do it? I'll tell you, it's because you are afraid; because you know so well that I would kill you with my hands! Well, so I shall presently, but first there are other things to be done."

He leaped toward the table, grasping the ruffian's wrist and twisting the knife from his hand. He

then threw the cursing adventurer aside as easily as if he had been a child. He surveyed the knife he had secured. The point was crimsoned.

"A brave weapon, this!" he sneered. "It tells of gallant deeds, of the conquest of the bound and helpless!" He passed the blade over the cords that bound Pitou to the table. The ropes fell severed to the floor. Godfrey lifted the old man and bore him back to us, placing him groaning on his pallet in a corner.

"Here, Gilbert," said John, slipping the knife to me, "you and Cyrenus are now ready and I shall have one in a moment." He smiled grimly.

The face of the bravo opposite grew red with wrath. "You're out, both of you," he growled, "and there will be traitors' necks to stretch for it. But yours will stretch with them, if we don't kill you here, for I shall take you back, you two, by God! Dead or alive, and the little weasel-faced whiffet with you, whom I don't know, or care for his identity!"

"You talk too much," replied John, with easy insolence, tossing aside his coat and baring his huge arms to the elbows. "You are brave enough when intimidating women and old men. As for men, here are three young ones; two of easy years, and the whiffet is youthful enough in heart, I can assure you, and I think you will find, in skill. Moreover, there is a fourth," indicating the dog, who, with gleaming eyes and low growls, was crouching by him. "Believe me, kinsman, the chances are more nearly equal than you think, and it is to the death this time."

An instant there was silence, while we glared across at each other in that rude room, lighted with

candles and flaming torches, for the bravo's crew had seen to it that there should be light and to spare upon their villainous proceeding. Red Rolfe, with his coat off, his mottled face flaming with evil fury, on the one side, with his six braves, every one a stalwart giant, with black eyes burning in impassive faces; on the other Cyrenus, John and me; two of us grasping our knives, the third with only his naked fists as yet, but terrible weapons, as some of us knew and others were speedily to discover; and lastly, the hound, a formidable ally, crouching at our feet. The flickering light played upon the odd face of Cyrenus, slit with its sour smile, lighted with piercing little eyes, the eyes that danced just now with the appreciation that proclaimed the strange little warrior a man to fear in times of stress like these. The glow shone upon Godfrey's stern face, pale with the prison pallor, framed in the unkempt black beard. The eyes of the hound were glowing, while he gathered, ready for a spring. Groans sounded from the suffering man in the corner. A moment thus—a tableau that can never fade from my memory—and then——

With a yell from their leader they were upon us. It was like a horrible, unreal nightmare. They slashed like fiends, for they were evidently determined to return us dead as being surer than to try to compass it with us alive. We were hard put to it. I found myself engaged with a tall savage who kept me busy for a few moments. Like the others, he had a knife. I sustained a slight flesh wound, but after a little I knocked his weapon from his hand and found his breast with my own. He ceased to trouble me. Another Indian came bounding at me, his knife descending in a powerful thrust.

I sought to parry it, but my own weapon was forced from my hand and his steel grazed my shoulder. His hand was at my throat and it would have been short shift with me but for a growling rush that bowled my assailant over, the hound at his throat. I picked up my knife, and, leaving him with his hands and face full of frenzied dog, I looked about me.

I had sprung into a corner when first engaged, in order to render it impossible for one of the treacherous beasts to stab me from behind. As I swept the room with anxious eyes, to see how the others were faring, I saw Cyrenus' blade go clean through the throat of a red ruffian, who dropped in a gush of blood, his life fast ebbing with the flood. Cyrenus had delivered the thrust exactly as he would have done with a rapier, and the unexpected tactics had proved a surprise that the savage lived hardly long enough to appreciate.

But there, at the opposite end of the room, was a struggle beside which our own seemed puny indeed. With Cyrenus and me, it had at least been man for man. We had dealt with but single opponents. Why had there not been more? The scene opposite told why. While the little man and I, to say nothing of the hound, were engaged, Red Rolfe and three of his braves had tried to master one man—and tried in vain.

For they reeled as we turned, bloody and battered, from the blows of those flails of fists, for he had used no other weapons. Rolfe himself, with crimsoned face and a closed eye, was moaning on the floor, clasping his stomach, where John, I judged, had kicked him. One redskin was making for the door, a swinging right arm telling of his

state. Two of them were upon the giant, clinging like wolves, thrusting with their knives, as Cyrenus and I leaped toward the the struggling group. I felled the rascal who was trying to escape, as I passed him, for it would not do to have all Frontenac about our ears just now.

As we hurried toward them, while the hound still worried the feebly struggling savage on the floor, John managed to secure a leglock about the limb of one of the redskins, who had been attempting to throw and throttle him. It was the deadly grapevine twist. John straightened his leg and the Indian, with a yell of uncontrollable pain, fell to the floor, his leg broken in two places. He crawled away moaning, the agony beating down even the stoicism of his race.

We stopped, Cyrenus and I. There was no need for our assistance now. There had been four while we were singly engaged, and of these four but one remained. Two lay helpless with broken limbs; a third, and their leader, still groveled, gasping for breath which it seemed as if he would never catch again. And we stood there to watch the finale, the little man and I.

They grappled, John and the Indian, the latter of a splendid build and muscles like steel. But in the broad shoulders and deep chest, the tapering, sinewy back and waist and iron limbs of the white man who towered above him, there was a power beside which his own was a puny thing. I know he felt it as he stood there, facing the giant whose prowess had been a terror to his people. But he gave no sign of fear, for which I give him credit. Weapon he had none for John had wrested it from

him. He had only his natural weapons, which were pitifully inadequate against the man who faced him.

It was over in a moment. A flash of time they glared into one another's eyes, then the Indian tried to jerk the trapper forward in an attempt to gain a hip-lock. John stumbled toward him, filling us with sudden dismay, which changed to wonder as we noted the success of the ruse. As Godfrey plunged forward, seemingly in the power of the redskin, whose black eyes flashed with exultation, the trapper suddenly grasped the left wrist of the Indan, forcing it outward with a sudden jerk. In a flash he had slipped his head under the Indian's arm and slid his free arm between the tawny legs. There was a quick snap upward of his body, a backward fling of the iron neck, a heaving upward of his arms, and the Indian went flying backward over the trapper's head across the room.

The wretch's skull crashed against the opposite wall. The body fell to the floor, shuddered convulsively and lay quite still. John drew a long breath and surveyed the situation. With the exception of a few insignificant scratches, he was unhurt.

"Well, we can start now, I guess," he observed.

"You have not finally disposed of that," I said, indicating the leader, very white now, who was picking himself up with some labor, his face a spectacle.

"Nor shall I," he answered, with a shrug. "Some one else must do it, Gilbert."

"Who else than you?" I demanded hotly. He has ruined your life; has tried to take it. He will do it yet, if——"

"Gilbert," he answered gravely, "we both have

the same father. What is to be must be. Because of the old man yonder in Frontenac, I cannot kill him."

I was silent.

"Where's the red you floored, Gilbert?" just then called out Cyrenus. "The one with a broken arm?"

We looked. The savage was gone.

A voice spoke, full of bitter malice, of evil joy.

"He's half way to Frontenac by this time," snarled Red Rolfe. "You'll never get out of here alive. They will soon be here, thick as hiving bees. It's short shift with you all!"

His eyes fell upon the stiffening forms of his men, ghastly in the pale light. Madness glowed in his eyes. Before we could realize his intention, he whipped a knife from his belt and made at me.

"I kill what I can!" he shouted. Guard, youngster!"

Taken by surprise, I stumbled backward, feeling for my own weapon, which I had thrust in my belt. His blade never reached me. A quick, strong hand interposed, wresting it from him, a powerful arm hurled him far to one side. He bounded to his feet like a ball.

"No?" he fiercely bellowed. "Well, by God! youngster, we'll try this!"

His hand flew up on a level with my face. It held a pistol. I bounded forward across the intervening gap between us. His fingers pressed the trigger.

There was a swift, confusing rush of a great bulk in front of me, out-reaching hands, trying to anticipate that shot. It rang out, and with the

report echoing in my ears, I was kneeling beside a great, shuddering form on the floor, with the twitching face and hand gripped convulsively over his breast. A moment I knelt there with a wild tumult in my brain, though my lips were dumb, a throbbing horror chilling my veins, for my blood seemed turned to ice. Then came, as if from far away, then nearing, a horrible sound; the bubbling of wild, maniacal laughter—Red Rolfe roared while his brother gasped out his life upon the floor.

"Well, by God!" he cried. "Winged the big one, eh? I'd never hoped for it. So he's gone first!" He roared again.

My blood grew hot again, beating like fire within me. I sprang to my feet.

"Rolfe," I muttered. "You shall not leave here alive. It is you and I now, and afterward, if you still live, the whiffet here will kill you!"

Cyrenus grasped my arm. "Neither of us!" he cried, exultation in his voice. "There is one with a better right! Look at the dog!"

The dog indeed! He crouched by his master's body, this demon with fiery eyes and growls like muttered thunder; hackles up; every muscle in his gaunt, powerful body taut and trembling; murder in his heart for the man he hated, the man he had twice before met in enmity and who had now killed his master before his flaming eyes. The feud of years between the dog and the man; a blood feud, to be fought out at last; the reckoning of the score. The scoundrel looked at the maddened animal; looked,—and suddenly remembered. His face paled; he reached for his fallen knife. As he stooped, the dog leaped.

The powerful jaws, like a bulldog's, were

fastened on the gasping throat, tearing the evil life out of it; the fangs buried deep, while Cyrenus and I stood over the dying ruffian and gloated. The dog's teeth sank into the great vein and opened it. The red flood dyed the brute's jaws, that settled the firmer. The man's clenched fists beat the beast impotently; the glaring eyes blazed futile hate; the tongue, bitten through and through with his agony, was thrust out horribly, as he uttered strangling gurgles, gurgles that grew weaker with the swelling of the red stream. It did not take long, for the hound was a veteran and a fit beast to champion his passing master. The bravo had no chance. When the dog had left him, for he knew when his task was done, Rolfe breathed raggedly once or twice and then lay still. The hound, with bloody jaws, padded softly to his master. He peered into the white face and whined.

Cyrenus and I knelt beside the dying man. I raised his head tenderly, resting it against my knee, smoothing back the black hair that fell over the chilling forehead. It seemed unreal, a thing evilly imagined; this passing out into the dark; this rending of the bond. As I watched him through dim eyes, his own opened. A shudder passed through the great frame. He coughed, blood bubbling from his lips.

"Through the lungs," he gasped, speech choking him. "I'm done for,—boys, both—" the old smile flashing toward Cyrenus. "I'm bleeding fast—inside. A few—moments more——" A hand, weakly extended on either side, was clasped in our own.

"And it was for me!" I cried, the bitterness of death smiting me like a mighty wave; the thought of this man, who had all to live for, suffering death

for the preserving of my own poor life, which must, though unknown to him, be henceforth so lonely; the thought that was even more bitter, that of the other life, fair and young, lost to me, that must be blasted through the sacrifice. The incomprehensible irony of it all struck me like a blow; the things as they were ordered; the fiat that doomed me to live while he slept and she sorrowed.

"Oh, John!" I cried. "I wish——"

"Hush, Gilbert," he gasped. "You—would have done the same—for me. I tried—to knock his arm up—but—he was too quick. Where—is he?"

"Dead on the floor, near you," replied Cyrenus grimly. "The hound killed him."

The dog thrust his face close to his master's. John fondled his head. "Good dog," he said simply. "I am glad—it was you."

There was silence for a moment. His pulse weakened; he was going fast. His head turned wearily, the great, black eyes staring wistfully through the log walls, back into the past. On either side, Cyrenus and I held his cold, nerveless hands. Cyrenus had folded his coat and slipped it under his head. Finally he spoke, so low we could scarcely hear him.

"It's been—a lonely way," he murmured. "I had thought,—but it's—nearly over!"

He turned his face to mine. "Gilbert," he said "I loved her,—you know. Tell her so."

I bowed my head, unable to speak.

"And," he said, "in the days—to come,—when you and yours are happy,—think of her,—Gilbert,—and be kind to her,—for she—will be lonely."

Happy in the coming days! I was glad, at the end of all for him, that he did not know.

The head settled back, the great eyes staring upward into our own.

"Out into—the dark," he whispered. "Still—the lonely way——"

The voice was still. Cyrenus closed his eyes, the big tears dropping upon the white face, tears that ennobled the little man and his manhood. As for me, I knelt in the shadow, silent and overwhelmed; words of solemn import, ages old, beating in my brain; the words of the gentle Nazarene:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend."

CHAPTER XLIII

TILL THE BOOK UNFOLDS

We managed, with infinite labor, to convey him between us, through the forest to the lake shore and the cove, where the boat that Cyrenus had brought lay in waiting. We were determined, the little man and I, that his body should rest where his stout heart had been, under the sod for which he had fought with the strength of ten, for which he had battled with the love of liberty that was in him.

When we arose from beside his body, we made hasty preparations for departure. We knew that ere long, too soon perhaps, all of Frontenac would be at the cabin, led by the disabled Indian who had escaped and likely by now given the alarm, and that the tortured Pitou would receive attention. We made him as comfortable as possible, then, procuring a lantern, which we found in the cabin, we lifted the dead man, a numbing weight, and stepped out with the hound, a sad procession, into the chilly night, leaving the cabin and its ghastly company till the searchers should come from Frontenac.

The distance was not great, but it was a muscle-racking strain. I locked my hands beneath his shoulders, the lantern depending from my fingers, the ghostly glow serving indifferently to indicate the way. Cyrenus held him by the knees. It was a

heavy weight. We had frequently to stop and rest a moment, but the need for haste urged us on. So we staggered onward through the dense thickets and over dead logs, stumbling often while the dead weight sagged, seeming ready to tear our arms from their sockets. Our backs were breaking; we panted for breath; but we were near the end now and plunged on. Finally we reached the shore. Close at hand, moored to the bank in deep water, lay the boat, a craft of respectable size. We laid the great, still form decently in the bottom, placing it upon a strip of canvas which we found there. I thought, as we were laboring with our senseless burden, of the splendid strength that was gone with him; the strength that would have performed, with ease and unaided, such a task as we had together completed with such infinite labor. A rush of tears blinded my haggard eyes.

Hastily hoisting the sails, which Cyrenus, for caution's sake, had lowered, we took in the hound and pushed out. Cyrenus was at the helm, bringing the boat up into the wind, which was strong and blew from the north. Once out from the shore, and it caught the sails, driving us south at racing speed.

It was dark at first, but after a little came the gray awakening. The dawn, dim and cheerless, gradually crept out of the east, spreading like a curtain out over the still scroll of the sky. Now the wind grew stronger, lashing the lake, which began to heave in long, rolling swells, carrying us, dipping, with them. Here and there were bared the teeth of whitecaps. A bank of clouds, vanguards, we feared, of an autumn gale, came rolling up from the north. The moan of the wind deepened. In

the stern the dog whined softly, licking the dead man's face.

"We had best tack and stand west," said Cyrenus. "We don't want to pass too close to their islands, as they are mostly garrisoned. It would be better to try for Port Putnam with this gale coming, but they've the lower lake and the river full of boats and it isn't safe. Better work out toward the open lake."

We tacked, heading southwest. A little while we drove along, it growing gradually brighter. The stars paled and went out, the gray day was fully ushered in. I sat in the bow, my gloomy eyes turned to the southward.

"Look," said Cyrenus, grimly.

I glanced behind us. Frontenac was already far astern, but the harbor was dotted with sails, skimming over the wind-swept water in our direction.

"They're after us," commented Cyrenus, "but we've a good start and this is a good slipper of a boat. There's a reef in that mainsail. Shake her out, Gilbert."

I obeyed his bidding with all speed. Then we were off again, the stout craft seeming to fly through the water.

"Now," said Cyrenus, "if we don't meet one of their cursed brigs coming back from a cruise, we're all right. Duck, Gilbert, we must tack."

A veritable cloud of sails was in pursuit, but we could not see that they gained much, if any. Cyrenus brought the boat well out into the open water, then sent her flying before the wind, directly across the lake. The pursuers kept on. Now some of them larger boats than our own, began to appreciably cut down the gap, though but slowly. Our

chances were still good. We carried a deal of canvas and every stitch was drawing. The gallant little boat slid through the water as if greased. Soon the town loomed low on the horizon, but the chase still continued.

We must have been a couple of hours out when there came a distant boom. A solid shot came skipping across the water some distance to one side of us.

"I thought some of those fellows were armed schooners," muttered Cyrenus. "But I've yet to see any one from Frontenac that's any on the shoot."

"If they do find the range," I said dryly, "we'll go down with her, along with John and the good old dog. No surrender, Cyrenus. Better the water than the rope."

He nodded approvingly. Another half hour went by. Several shots more were fired without effect. Some of the boats, with greater sail area than our own, drew nearer.

"I'm afraid that unless one of Chauncey's brigs is out cruising," said Cyrenus, "which it probably isn't when it might do some good, that we're dished."

"Then we'll drown!" I exclaimed. Again his approving nod, and we lapsed into silence as deep as that of the man in the stern.

Suddenly I leaned forward. I had been facing the fleet since its appearance in our wake. "Look, Cyrenus!" I cried. "They're turning about; they're leaving us! What is the trouble?"

He, sitting quietly there, never turned his head, instead, his eyes swept the sky. "That!" he answered simply, with pointing finger. I looked.

From the southwest there was rolling up a black, opaque bank of clouds, storm-fringed and menacing. Lightning flamed from the heart of the approaching mass; the diapason of thunder muttered and rolled; was silent and growled again. Far to our rear the erstwhile pursuers, facing about, raced for home. Without my noticing it the wind had shifted with startling swiftness and this terror was racing down upon us.

"Under bare poles, boy!" cried Cyrenus, springing to assist me. "There'll be hell to pay in a few minutes!"

We worked like mad. The sails came rustling down. Now Cyrenus again took the tiller. After passing the islands, far back in the rear, he had tacked considerably to the southeast, for we hoped soon to gain American waters on the chance that we might fall in with a vessel which could afford us protection. We judged now that the shore was not far distant. Presently we could see it, still several miles away, while beyond an open stretch of water marked the beginning of its journey to the sea of the St. Lawrence. But the shore, would we reach it? For now there was rolling down the lake another black mass, cloud-ribbed and terrible. Chaos was to rule on the waters that day.

I stood gazing at the body of my friend, helpless in this wild waste; deaf to the roar of the wind; blind to the awful portent of that black sky. To go down in that seething maw; to be bruised and battered, buffeted and pounded by those smashing billows, without the ability to bend one of those mighty muscles, now so useless, for his preservation; to be finally cast upon some rocky beach, vomited out of the deep, a bloated thing of horror!

Was this to be his fate; a bit of loathsome flotsam, hurled here and there, in wanton diversion, by the element that should eventually spew him forth, a horrible, ghastly burden, to be committed with shudders of disgust to his native earth? Was it for this that we had borne him from the spot where he had purchased my poor life with his own?

Better a bed in the calm beneath the storm; better an eternal resting place far below; the poor, still frame unbuffeted by storms; where the raging of the surges over him would be no more than the purling of meadow brooks in his unheeding ears; where he might sleep, in that peace which passeth understanding, silent in his still grave, until the day when the great sarcophagi of the waters, with the tombs of earth, unite in giving up their dead.

I knelt by the body and began to roll about it the canvas on which it lay. The dog watched me with sad eyes, as if he knew. And he licked the dead man's face, even as I, for the last time, grasped the dead man's hand.

"Cyrenus!" I called. He was beside me, steadying himself in the pitching boat, his hand against the mast.

"If three of us go down to-day," I told him, "one shall not come up again!"

He grasped my meaning instantly and bent with me over the task. We rolled the canvas over the body, securing it with some rope we found in the stern. There were some sand bags there, also, used for ballast. Three of these we bound about the still form, knotting them firmly. It was soon done. In the event of our capsizing, the body would sink like a plummet.

Our work finished, we raised our eyes to the

sombre sky, Cyrenus making his way back to the tiller. The sweep of a mighty wind, rushing to meet the giant which was coming to oppose it, drove us on, nearer to the shore. Now, even as we gazed into the black sky, the opposing currents met, crashing together in a deafening reverberation of thunder.

A moment the boat seemed to stop, trembling in the clutch of those wrestling gusts. The next instant she was heeled over, climbing like a fly up the side of a huge, green wall, only to topple over the crest down into a hissing chasm. Cyrenus and I were hurled into the bottom, where we gasped, drenched with spray, clutching the mast. The dog crouched howling by that long, still shape that rolled and lurched, fearfully inert, with the pitching of the boat.

A flood of icy rain poured out of the black vault overhead. The thunder rolled like an endless cannonade; the lightning writhed like a soul in pain. Everywhere that great, hissing, boiling waste of water raged and roared; everywhere the vast mouth of the deep frothed and foamed, like a wild beast attacking its prey; everywhere the wind shrieked in mad, elementary joy. The boat, poised dizzily on the crest of a huge, uplifting wall, slid swiftly down as it dissolved under her, only to reel and mount again. Cyrenus made his way back to the stern, grasping the tiller. Broken, it swung idle in his hands.

Now she was in the trough, swung broadside to a huge, ripping wave that came thundering down upon her, filling her half full of water. She trembled and turned over. As she did so, Cyrenus and I, who were ready, sprang clear.

We could do no more than keep afloat in that raging waste, and I knew we could not do that long. I lost sight of Cyrenus and wondered dully if he had succumbed. Suddenly I heard him call ahead. I answered it.

"Keep afloat, Gilbert!" he called, above the storm. "There's land ahead, quite close."

It put new life into me. A few moments after we were flung, bruised and exhausted, on the shore some distance from Port Putnam.

As we were wading out of the water I heard, close behind me, a plaintive whine. Shaking himself as he gained the shallows, the hound followed us to land.

* * * *

We hurried on to Sackets Harbor, after securing horses, for the storm spent its force quickly. We arrived in the afternoon. I first visited General Izard, giving him my report and acquainting him with John's death. He was profoundly shocked, for he had known and esteemed him.

"I wish to acknowledge our indebtedness to you, Captain Warburton," he said, extending his hand. "You have been more than gallant and trustworthy. And now there is one more commission I would like to have you execute, with friends this time. How soon can you be ready to start for Washington with some important communications which I wish to send by special courier? There is also some work you must do there."

"At once," I replied promptly. "To-night."

"They are all ready," he repeated doubtfully, "but I dislike letting you go so quickly. You must be worn out."

"I will start in half an hour, and will be here for

final instructions within that time," I answered, and saluting, left him.

I welcomed the opportunity. In my present mood I felt that I must have action or go mad.

I walked up the main street. I would not go to the house yet. I proceeded to the bluff. A woman stood there, looking out at the tumbling waters. She turned and saw me, uttering a little joyful cry, extending both her hands.

"Why, M'sieur Gilbert, back again!" she cried. "And where is M'sieur Godfrey?"

Something in my face whitened her own. "Why, what has happened?" she faltered.

I told her all, as gently as I could, from the tragedy's beginning to its end out yonder, averting my eyes that I might not read the agony in hers. "I shall not go to the house," I ended low. "I cannot. I am ordered to Washington at once. Cyrenus will tell them. I have not the heart. But you, mam'selle, I felt that you must hear it from me."

Then I raised my eyes to her white, stricken face. She stood as one blind and dumb. A great wave of pity for her left me trembling. I stepped forward, lifting her cold, little hand to my lips, then turned and left her.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE PATHS OF PEACE

December came, with its wolfish howl of unleashed winds in the northland I had quitted, with gray mildness in Washington. The Ghent treaty was signed; the nations released their clutch upon each other's throats. But news crept in those days. Ere the tiding had reached Louisiana's coast, Jackson had in January won behind his cotton bales the battle of New Orleans, and the wretched record of the national arms at the north, generally considered, was put to shame. In a measure, the closing act of a dreary drama was a needed redemption of the past.

I was busy at the capital for some time after the coming of peace, and found ways in which to be of use to my government of which I need not speak here, since my subsequent active career, which lasted till age had laid its heavy hand upon me and I retired to rest for the little time remaining to me, is sufficiently indicative of the success of my endeavors. It will suffice to say that at the time of my journey to Washington I bore most complimentary endorsements of my services from Generals Izard and Brown. The latter, in the after years, when his worth had been recognized and he was in his rightful place at the head of our armies, proved

a valuable friend. I had no better, and to his kindly interest I owe much of the success that has attended my career.

The spring of the south had burst in balm and bloom when I was ready to return, with the assurance of a responsible post abroad in the near future and the friendly interest and regard of influential men whose friendship later proved good fortune to me. As the day approached for my return for a season there was a tentative pleasure in the thought of it, but there was also a wistful pain. Ambition reared its head. I was young and not of the weak type that pines and pules for the love of a woman when that love can remain but a dream. My career remained for what, with all the power within me, I could make of it. Though a lonely, loveless way, I would follow it, and, however stern the chase, pursue and capture Opportunity. It were better so, infinitely better, than to sit idle in the shadows, mocked by the wraiths of my dead dreams.

As I strolled through the streets of the city on those wonderful spring nights, breathing the soft air, the myriad murmurs of the exultant emancipation from the white death of winter sounding in my ears, my thoughts, tender as the kiss of a mother, winged to the northland. A belated awakening was there. The sweep of the forest was still bare and brown; the grasses of the year that was dead were stale and withered. Out in the lake the fragments of the broken ice floes still tossed and tumbled, grinding together in the grim throes of dissolution. Under the unrest, far down in the stillness, in the calm that dwells below the heaving waters, which rolled above him, lay the body of the man whose soul had gone out into the silence for

me; the friend whose life, in ebbing, had taken with it an irrevocable, irrecoverable something of my own; a something that would, with the slipping years, when I should sit among my memories in the dusk of the failing day, call to me out of the silence and spell my eyes adream, gazing out and beyond into the mists that veil the mystery.

And something else he had taken with him down into the deep, something warm and living and true, something, I had lost ere I had gained it—the heart of a woman. It lay with him, buried in the still sepulchre to which my own hands had consigned him; and the door of my own heart, which might enshrine but the one fair image, was closed and sealed and against it was rolled the stone of resignation.

So it was that I gazed to the north with a chaotic mingling of longing and of dread; that I yearned for the sight of her face and the light of her eyes, while my soul shrank at the emptiness that lay by the side of the wide water, beyond the intervening reaches of the awakening valleys and the sunlit hills. The light of her eyes! Sweet eyes, once hued with the blending of the glory of a sunlit sea and smiling sky, but shadowed now, while they mourned, misty with falling tears. Each of us treading the gloom of a separate way, a gray way, full of utter loneliness. Mine the dream that lived though it was dead, that must live till the sweet eyes, that held the light of the world, be closed. Her's the pitiful, the hopeless destiny; the dream that was unalterably dead, dead with the man out yonder; that might still live only in the hope that trembles before the closed door of the Unknown—the door before

which we stand in hushed awe and wonder if indeed Death holds the key.

The day for my departure came at last and I set forth, by the slow methods in vogue in those days, for home. A season of languorous sailing in indifferent winds brought me to New York. I ascended the Hudson to Albany and made the remainder of the journey in jolting stage coaches and upon indifferent horseflesh.

I journeyed by the latter method from Utica to Watertown, which village I reached in the afternoon of a day in early May. I put up my horse for rest and fodder at the tavern, where, long before, John and I had heard the news of the declaration of war. I then entered the taproom, which I found filled with many of my old acquaintances. There was an animated buzz of conversation.

A welcoming chorus of salutations greeted my entrance. In the midst of them I found my hand grasped in a firm and fleshy clasp. Turning, I beheld Noadiah.

"Why, Sergeant," I exclaimed, "I am glad to see you!"

"Lootenant, now, Captain," he responded importantly, his fat face shining with satisfied ambition. "I was made one right after you left on that last scout of yours over the river. They said it was on account of general efficiency, incloodin' that second affair at the Harbor. And it was in the paper that way."

"I congratulate you," I said heartily, at which he thrust out the great folds of his cheeks. "I suppose you're retired now," I added.

"Yes, two wars is enough at my age," he replied, with becoming modesty. "Cyrenus, though,—I

guess he's itchin' for another. I never seen such a fire eater. Abner, he's behavin' himself. He's back on the farm with Betsey. Betsey, she's got more respec' for 'im now, quittin' a sergeant the way he did. Don't give 'im down the banks the way she used to. Why, she lets 'im come here to town once in a while by himself."

Noadiah must have noticed my look of surprise at his mention of Bantwell's name, for he added, with a solemnity befitting the announcement:

"We're rekernciled, me an' Cyrenus, as Abner allus wanted us ter be. Cyrenus quit a lootenant, too, you know, and he ought ter have been made a cap'n. He re-enlisted after he got back from Frontenac with you. I happened to hear that he got you and poor Godfrey,—God rest him!—out of the box you was in and that he took chances to do it. So, when he'd got back and you'd gone pikin' on to Washington, without as much as stoppin' to say a howdy-do, I stopped him the first time I seen him at the Harbor. Says I, 'Cyrenus,' I says, 'I want ter take back them words I said to you in the tavern at Watertown, before this trouble came up. You're a brave man,' I says, 'and here's my hand, if you want it.' And he took it, and we've been good friends ever since."

"I am glad of it!" I said heartily. The two old fellows were too sturdily similar in the welding quality of courage to be at enmity. I was glad the feud was healed.

"And," added Noadiah, lowering his tone, "another thing, Captain. There's a second Mrs. Swanson now, and I ain't a widow man no longer and neither is she that was Mrs. Hankinson a

widow woman. We was married two months ago."

I grasped the fleshy hand in warm congratulation. It was fitting; it could not be better. Noadiah was worthy and gallant and the ex-widow, as he had so emphatically declared to me on a broken Sabbath so long before, was a woman.

"So Abner quit as a sergeant, did he?" I commented. "I believe you said so."

"Yes," replied Noadiah. "That Sandy Creek affair, you know. If the war had lasted long enough, I guess Abner'd quit a lootenant too, like me 'nd Cyrenus."

"Yes," I muttered reflectively. "I guess so, if it had lasted long enough."

"I'm satisfied," wailed a familiar voice at my elbow. "An' the war, it lasted long enough for me."

There he stood, as of old, unchanged, lifeless, listless and replete of settled melancholy. He extended a limp hand to me in weary greeting.

"Jest came in," he assured us, "from the farm, to pass the evenin'. It's surprising what inflooence a little military stint by a man will have over a woman. I'm gettin' more leeway these days. Good thing I enlisted." I smiled unobtrusively. The potent power that had forced Abner's enlistment was through that act undone, for Abner had become invested in Betsey's eyes with a martial glamour that inspired awe in her breast and rendered his path one of roses.

"Let's liquor," said Abner, leading the way to a group. We liquored and I spent some time conversing with them. As I had rather expected, the British had not made their threatened invasion the previous fall, though preparations for it had gone

ahead till the news came of the suspension of hostilities, they meditating an ice attack at the time. Chauncey and Yeo had continued their harmless series of threatened movements, unbacked by action, up to the time that the ice closed navigation, and the end of the war found them each solemnly building more brigs for the succeeding season's operations. I doubt not that had the war been protracted long enough Ontario would have been strewn so thickly that one could have walked across to Frontenac on the boats of the rival fleets, the sole effect of whose building had been the denudation of the forests.

I learned that Cyrenus, since the close of the war, had been at my father's. Mars seemed astir in him, and he talked either of joining the regular army or migrating to some far shore where there was trouble on. I determined to induce him to remain and resume the pursuits of peace.

I had a late supper at the tavern, then ordered my horse saddled. I mounted and rode slowly out of the village and onto the remembered road to the Harbor. I recalled sadly John and myself riding together to the town on the night of the reception of the news of war. A round moon rode in a star-strewn sky. The dreamy drone of nocturnal insects murmured in the tall grasses that fringed the roadway. There was the occasional hoot of an owl in the nearby woods; further on there sounded the pessimistic croaking of the frogs in the marshes. The night was altogether lovely, but I rode alone and my heart was heavy. I proceeded, lost in a sad reverie.

Ere long the twinkling lights of the post showed

close at hand. Presently I rode into the village, proceeding directly to our stable, which was some distance from the house. I turned the animal over to the boy, who was startled at seeing me, and walked away.

I would not go to the house just yet, I decided. My mood led me slowly up the street toward the bluff. It was late and the street was well nigh deserted. I encountered only an occasional straggler.

The white spectral peace of the moonlight irradiated the sleeping village, sprawled in silence like that of a country churchyard. The mute black mouths of silent batteries, the cannon already rusting, gaped near at hand. The log forts and the rude barracks, holding perhaps here and there a handful of sleeping men, seemed tenantless. Down at the docks on Shiphouse Point, mounted upon stocks that should crumble to decay, showed, weird and ghastly in the moonlight, the giant skeletons of half finished frigates, precisely as they were left with the dropping of the hammers at the news of peace, as grotesquely incomplete as the tale that is told of the navies of Ontario. The hamlet drowsed, bathed in moonlight, still as August meadows; as if war or the rumors of war had never pierced its ears; as if the diapason of the cannonade had never thrilled and made of it a thing alive; as if war was a dream and only its own strange peace a still reality. I felt the spell as I went on. It was a presage of the days, so soon to come, when the old village, upon which the eyes of the entire nation were turned in that memorable grapple, should be but an obscure frontier post, a sleepy old mausoleum of dim memories; a thing forgotten that once was all in all; a crumbling crypt

of hoary traditions that would grow old and enfeebled with the flowing of the years, as the glowing present crowds out the senile past. The paths of glory,—ah me!

So, in the still peace of the moonlight, I walked on until I came to the bluff. My head bent in wistful retrospection, I advanced to the edge and looked out over the still face of the deep. Not a breath of air stirred; the lake was a silver mirror in which was reflected the moonlight and the glory of the stars. Peace, the peace that passeth understanding, rested on the waters.

Had there indeed ever blown lashing winds, whipping that calm, shimmering surface into boiling shapes of frenzy that beat out the lives of men and scattered their ships, broken in driftwood, upon the rocky shores? Had there indeed ever sounded from that placid sea before me the thunder of the cannonade, while the shots were returned, in murderous hate, from the very spot on which I stood? In the midst of this still, perfect beauty, in the white radiance that shamed the dark deeds of men, the memory of past days seemed a profanation.

Suddenly there was a soft stir near me, a soft tongue licked my hand. Dumb, dark eyes looked wistfully up into my face.

"Gypso!" cried a voice, subtly sweet. "Come here, sir!" I sprang to my feet. She extended her hands with a glad little cry.

"Renee!" I cried. All the love without hope, all the bitter longing that time nor death could assuage, rang like a knell in my voice. I was bending over her, her slender hands crushed within my own, gazing deep into her eyes, her wonderful, changing eyes, now so dark, so full of shadowed mystery in

the moonlight. A moment so we stood, and then she drew her hands away. And I remembered, remembered with a dull pain at my heart that grew and grew, and, as I knew so well, must still grow until the end.

"When did you arrive, Gilbert?" she asked me, "and why did you not let us know you were coming? Have you been at the house?"

"No mam'selle," I answered her. "I have just come. I walked here a moment first. My mood was a lonely one. I wanted to think."

"To think," she echoed wistfully, her eyes turned to the shimmering lake. "Ah, yes, M'sieur Gilbert, we must all think, must we not? So much! And so much of our thinking, how sad it is, Gilbert! Ah, there is so much sadness in the old world, so many tears!"

"True, mam'selle," I answered low. "It is a gray old world. Fate spins so many skeins of life awry, and we are helpless. We can only wonder why. Why, indeed?"

"Yes, why?" murmured the girl, her voice breaking. "Why is it that the splendid fellow, your friend and mine, is lying so still to-night out yonder? Why is it that Dorothy's heart must be broken with its very awakening? Ah, they are tangled skeins, Gilbert, in this grim old world!"

"My friend and yours!" I cried confusedly. "And Dorothy,—why, Renee, what of Dorothy?"

She gazed at me, startled. "Why, Gilbert, I thought you knew!" she exclaimed. "They were betrothed."

"Betrothed!" I repeated, like one dazed. "But how,—Renee, I do not comprehend! I thought it was you!"

"I!" she repeated amazedly, "I do not understand you, Gilbert."

I bent forward, seizing her hand. "The night before I left on my last trip across the lake," I told her, "after you and I had walked back from this spot, do you remember? Afterward I stepped into the garden. You were with him. I heard him ask you a question. He said it had been a lonely way for him. And your reply, I heard that also, Renee."

She had been looking away. Now she turned her eyes upon me. They were brimming with tears.

"He had confided to me his love for your sister, Gilbert," she said softly. "He asked me if I thought there was hope for him. We had been much together, she and I, and, though she had said nothing, I knew there was hope and told him so, for we women can read each other, Gilbert. The next day they were betrothed."

I stared helplessly, overwhelmed. So this was the secret which John had meant to confide to me that night in the forest, when I anticipated him; Dorothy's his dying message. O, how blind I had been!

"Her heart is dead, poor Dorothy!" said Renee at my elbow, her voice full of tears, "dead with him out yonder."

"Poor child!" I said, brokenly. "And I—I have been blind!"

There was silence for a space. The hound sat silent near us, gazing out over the moonlit water. Now, in his utter loneliness, he threw up his head, howling pitifully. Then silence fell again and he sat, like a graven image, eyes fixed once more on the still, radiant waters.

"He comes here nightly," murmured the girl at my elbow. "Watching, always watching,—and waiting."

"Waiting," I repeated mechanically, for the word was like a knell. Then——

"Renee," I told her low, with something in my voice that throbs but once in the life of a man, "I too, had waited, till hope died, and afterward I kept vigil where it lay coffined. But now, whether with reason it is for you to say, it lives again. There is something I must now tell you, something I had never expected to say. Why, you will understand. But since that night, dear girl, the night in the garden, my soul has lain in the shadow. Is the shadow to be lifted, dear? For I love you, have loved you from the beginning! And you—your answer. What shall it be, Renee? Now and irrevocably."

Her head was turned from me; she stood with downcast eyes, silent. I grasped her hands, drawing her close. Slowly her face, lovely as a flower, radiantly pure and sweet in the moonlight, was raised to mine. A divine world unfolded in her shadowed eyes, a world of promise and of peace, of love and the lilies of the field of life. Then——

"To the end," she whispered; it was all. But it merged the white grace of land and sea with the glory of the stars; it attuned a rolling world to the wistfully exultant strain that can sound but once; it bound us, heart and soul, through the day of life and unto the expiring glow of the setting sun and afterward, by grace of the thrilling portent that the soul whispers of God's eternity, stretching illimitably beyond the world! So, heart to heart, we faced the future that smiled like a garden gemmed with beaded dew, radiant with bloom. The moment,

than which there is nothing like again in the round old world, was ours; the moment which, though so soon gone, was to leave behind it enough of the grace of its fleeting exaltation to sweeten all the after years. The after years! To whom do they not bring the memories of such a moment, with the wistful swelling of the heart that throbs more quickly, as with a remembered strain of sweetest music, and dim the eyes with tears!

After a little I asked her low, "But how came you to care for me, Renee? I had not dreamed of it."

"I have cared long, Gilbert," she answered, "but you were blind, as blind as was your poor comrade," with a little sob in her voice. "You were both braver with men than with women, else you would each have learned sooner," smiling through gathering tears. "As for you, I could not propose to you, you know," with tender coquetry.

"I thought you considered me merely as a warm friend," I answered humbly. "There was nothing to indicate that I might have presumed——"

"A woman may not wear her heart upon her sleeve," she told me, with a fine dignity. "What the lover may plainly see, in such case, so may the world, and the prize's value lessens in his eyes. And a bold lover, mon chere," now with laughter in her eyes, "will make an end of doubt, for weal or woe. He will not dawdle."

"True, Renee," I answered, with humility. "I was faint of heart, though deep in love. And you divined it?"

"I had thought so," she answered, her eyes now darkening with a reminiscent shadow, "until you left me so suddenly, the day you told me of him

out yonder," indicating the moonlit lake, "nor stopped, even to comfort your sister or any of us, all of whom loved him. Then I thought you selfish in your grief, and afterward, when you failed to write me, I wondered if, after all, you had ever cared for me as I had thought. And I suffered agonies because of my feeling for you, that seemed so unrequited, for I am proud, Gilbert!" with a regal lifting of her little head. "But now I understand," her lovely hand upon my shoulder. "Poor boy, you have suffered, as have I. But now the day breaks for us."

"'And the shadows flee away,' dear heart," I breathed, drawing her close. "Ours the full of life, and, please God, through His eternity. The white world, is it not radiant in the moonlight? It seems as if it would be so always, a white way of peace to the end!"

"Ah, no, Gilbert," she answered, moving back a step, her white hands upon my shoulders, sweet eyes seeking my own, her voice laden with the sad intuition of woman that is the heritage of ages of women's tears. "There will be often the gray, often the storm and rain. But the sun shines," with a brave smile, "behind it all and presently the clouds roll away and show the blue—and the rain is over and gone."

THE END